

CHURCH GROWTH DEVELOPMENT: EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT IN THE
BROWNSVILLE SECTION OF BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to prepare church leaders to become aware of the role of the church in a community that had become ineffective in the actualization of their faith. My challenge was to assess and develop church leaders in new dynamic ways in becoming deeply aware of the community/church needs holistically. This study was to further implement a Literacy Awareness Program where the congregation became acutely aware of community needs, and engaged themselves in becoming all that God intended them to be toward serving the community locally and globally for kingdom building.

Research showed that the congregation lacked the awareness of unresolved empathy that was persistent in the community in terms of high crime rates and the mis-education of the youth. Book of Hosea 4:6 (NRSV) “My people perish from a lack of knowledge.” This is a constant reminder of what the late Charles Haddon Spurgeon referred to particularly this “scripture as our inexhaustible textbook, the Lord Jesus our boundless subject and the Holy Spirit our divine infinite helper.” In others words we need God at all times and places. This dissertation ascertained the creditability of the congregation that was sited in a strategic location but yet lacked the ability to be effective in a community that was quite literally desperately soliciting help in un-acceptable ways.

Engaging in the implementation of the Campaign Literacy Awareness program the leaders in the congregation became acutely aware of their roles and excitement, exuberated with willingness toward achieving and improving their surroundings. This Campaign Literacy Awareness Program will be an on-going textbook endowed by the Holy Spirit to meet humankind's' needs and the congregational leaders I now know will humbly lead the way.

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughters, Renee Love, PhD., Sheila Maxwell, PhD., and Ruthie Cannon, PhD., and my grandchildren they were supportive of me and encouraged me tirelessly. They prayed that I would accomplish my long awaited goal.

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I also thank God for my entire church family for they never gave up on the possibilities of God moving and supplying impossible promises and undertakings. They assured me and let me know that I was His; therefore, I had to succeed. I am humbled by their faith in God for me.

To my colleagues in the ministry I simply say, thank God for each of you who continued to nurture me with scriptures such as Romans 8: 28 “For we know that all things work together for good for those that love the Lord and are called according to His Purpose.” Yes I have come to know that we already know this. You too; Lord has been with me in my struggle.

To my Bible study and prayers warriors thank God for each of you; may there be a reward waiting for you in heaven.

To my sisters and brothers who are now in Christ and have declared that they the Lord Jesus Christ as their savior and His name is Y’shua (Jew for Jesus). You came along just when I needed you most.

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CHAPTER 1

HISTORY AND SETTING OF BROWNSVILLE

This researcher is a pastor of the historically renowned Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, located in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, N.Y.—home to the largest concentration of public housing developments in the entire nation.¹ Statistics show there is only a 27% high school graduation rate and a high school dropout rate of 39% in the Brownsville community.² These astonishing statistics show that the church leadership in the neighborhood does not understand its role in addressing this problem. If this issue is not addressed, the educational level will continue to decline and the dropout rate will continue to increase. This demonstration project will develop an educational literacy awareness campaign to raise the awareness of the congregation and the community to the educational needs of the Howard Housing Community in Brownsville.

The Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is located in the Ocean Hill Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York. The Church is part of a Connectional Church, headquarters located in Charlotte, North Carolina. There are approximately fifty persons in the congregation. Most of the congregation is related and rely upon each other for transportation to and from the sanctuary. The services are held every Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The services are: Sunday school and

¹ <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/home/home.shtml> (accessed November 7, 2012).

² <http://www.city-data.com/neighborhood/Brownsville-Brooklyn-NY.html> (accessed November 7, 2012).

Worship, Eucharist every 1st Sunday; membership meetings every 2nd Sunday; Trustee and Stewards meetings are held once a month; and Bible study twice a week, Fridays at the sanctuary, and Sundays via telephone from the members' home. There are also participants who engage in Bible study via telephone from other states. Outreach Bible Study is by request. Both studies are held for one hour. Adoption of prison ministry is held for children whose parents are incarcerated. We have instituted prayer the first Friday of every month at the sanctuary and via telephone every Monday for the Brownsville parishioners and those from other denominations as well as other states. Many of the members have engaged in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Leadership Training Institute which is held annually by the Connectional Church. All worship services are charismatic in that they are lively as opposed to the traditional Methodist congregational service. The youth are engaged in liturgical dance and there is a Mass and a male choir. There has been better participation in praise and worship services as a result. Even with all of the services and programs, there appears to be something intrinsically taking place as people join, fellowship with the congregation, but after a while they drop out of sight, and no one hears from them anymore. This is a problem that I have labored over in prayer. Training leaders to become aware of their surroundings and their influences on others is difficult to attain. For many are stuck in the old ways and refuse to adapt to a new and more innovative approach. We are housed across from one of the largest housing in the nation; yet, no one cares to reach out to the people in this complex and let them know that we too, are a part of them. More will be explained later in regards to the church and its congregation in this dissertation.

Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church provides a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) Educational Literacy Awareness Program for the community and many persons have received their high school diplomas as a result of this effort. Many of the students are pursuing higher educational goals for use in their long awaited dreams of becoming productive citizens in the community. The church as previously stated is situated across from the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), and we have become an asset to the community. Many of the congregants have benefitted greatly by serving the community as an outreach facility; ministering to them is an on-going effort. There are those who have not gotten involved for whatever the reasons. “Jews for Jesus” have been involved with our out-reach ministry and it is an on-going project that is saving lives for God. The church has provided an on-going clothing-drive and also collects for other community needs such as furniture and appliances. The church is attempting to meet their needs spiritually and physically.

Demographics:

The church community of Brownsville/Ocean-Hill is located in Eastern Brooklyn, New York, a largely residential neighborhood. The total land area is one square mile, and the ZIP code for the neighborhood is 11212. The Brownsville Community is bordered by East New York Avenue to the north (on the Bedford-Stuyvesant border), East 98th Street to the west (East Flatbush) and the freight rail Bay Ridge Branch of the Long Island Rail Road to the south (adjacent to the neighborhood of Canarsie) and to the east (East New York).

The area is patrolled by the 73rd Precinct located at 1470 East New York Avenue. New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) property in the area is patrolled by Police

Service Area 2 (P.S.A. 2.) It is part of Brooklyn Community Board 16. In 2010, Brownsville's population was 116,579 and the demographics were 70.8% Non-Hispanic Black or African American, 19.1% Hispanic/Latino primarily of Puerto Rican descent, 2.9% Non-Hispanic White, 1.8% Asian/Pacific Islander and 5.4% described themselves as other. 29.9% of the population were High School graduates and 8.4% had a Bachelor's degree or higher. As of 2008, the median household income was \$15,978. There were a total of 28,298 housing units in Brownsville.³

Brownsville is home to the largest concentration of public housing developments in the entire nation. Within this one-square mile neighborhood, nearly 23 percent of Brownsville's 85,161 residents live in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments. Comparatively, in all of New York City, NYCHA residents represent only 8.4 percent of the total population. According to 2008 census data, 48.1 percent of residents in Brownsville and nearby Ocean Hill received some type of income support—be it public assistance or supplemental security income. Census data shows that residents in the 11212 zip code for Brownsville have a per capita income nearly half that of the United States average—\$10,666 to \$21,587—and that 38.3 percent of all individuals were living below the poverty line, as opposed to 12.4 percent for the entire nation.⁴

Brownsville is dominated by public housing developments of various types. There is also a significant concentration of semi-detached multi-unit row houses similar to those found in East New York and Soundview surrounding the public housing developments. Many, however, have been torn down and are now either vacant lots or newly constructed

³ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36047.htm> (accessed November 7, 2012).

⁴ Ibid.

subsidized attached multi-unit row houses. There are also a small number of tenements in the area. The neighborhood contains the highest concentration of NYCHA developments in New York City.

Initially, Brownsville was a Jewish community, politically radical—throughout the 1920s and 1930s, it elected Socialist and American Labor Party candidates to the state assembly. As early as the 1910s, the area had acquired a reputation as a vicious slum and breeding ground for crime. It has been known throughout the years for its criminal gangs and in the 1930's and 1940's achieved notoriety as the birthplace of Murder, Inc. It was a predominantly Jewish neighborhood until the 1960s, by which time its population had become largely black and Brownsville's unemployment rate was 17 percent. Half of all families in the district lived on less than \$5,000 a year.⁵

In September 1967, a riot occurred following the death of an 11-year-old black male Richard Ross who was killed by a black New York City Police Department (NYPD) Detective John Rattley at the corner of St. Johns Place and Ralph Avenue. He was suspected of mugging a 73-year-old white Jewish man. The riot was additionally fueled by Brooklyn militant Sonny Carson who spread false rumors that a white policeman killed the youth for no reason and was only quelled after Brooklyn North Borough Commander Lloyd Sealy deployed a squad of 150 black police officers to the riot scene to prevent further looting. The officer responsible was later cleared after a grand jury refused to indict him.⁶

⁵ Wendell E. Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 33-37.

⁶ <http://ohbcyp.wordpress.com/history> (accessed November 7, 2012).

In 1968 Brownsville was the setting of a protracted and highly contentious teachers' strike. The Board of Education had experimented with giving the people of the neighborhood control over the school. The new administration laid off several teachers in violation of union contract rules. The teachers were all white and mostly Jewish, and the resulting strike served to badly divide the whole city. The resulting strike dragged on for half a year, becoming known as one of John Lindsay's "Ten Plagues."⁷

While Brownsville AME Zion Church is part of a Connectional church it has its own autonomy. She has maintained herself for fifty years in the Brownsville section of East New York. Every year she gives an account of herself to the Connectional Council. The connectional Church Council is located in Charlotte, North Carolina. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was established in 1796 which makes it one of the oldest churches in the United States. "In the late 1700s, the Methodist Church in America was facing great discontent. Black members contributed generous annual assessments but were refused the right to vote within the Church. They were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the mistreatment they received. Three groups soon separated from the Methodist Church and continue their work to this day.

Richard Allen, a freeman and former slave, was consecrated bishop in the White Methodist Church in Philadelphia. With his members, he left the Church in 1793 and chartered the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

James Varick was a sexton in the white Methodist Church. Three years later, he was consecrated bishop in England and successfully chartered the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in October of 1796. Along with Peter Williams and Charles Rush,

⁷ Vincent J. Cannato, *The Ungovernable City* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 302.

Varick is considered a forefather of the AME Zion Church. Thirteen years after that, a group calling themselves the Colored Methodist Episcopalians (now the Christian Methodist Episcopalians) split from the Methodist Church for the same reasons that the AME and AME Zion Churches had been chartered.

The 1820s saw a schism within the Church between the northern and southern conferences. The Southern Conference had developed a pro-slavery doctrine and catechism to accommodate slavery. The Northern Conference remained against slavery. These differences were not mediated until the two conferences officially split. The session laws for North Carolina of 1836-1837 prohibited slaves from preaching in public and holding gatherings. In 1715, these laws had forbidden preaching to slaves. Oversight responsibility was appropriated to county and state governments by the session laws of 1788. Ordinances were also enacted to restrict the means by which slaves could purchase their freedom.⁸

James Varick was elected the first bishop of the AME Zion Church in 1822. The house that he and other AME Zion leaders rented in New York was often referred to as “The Liberator and the Freedom Church and was a frequent stop on the Underground Railroad. The AME Zion Church remained steadfast in its stand against slavery and works against oppression to this day.

In 1864, the leadership of the AME Zion Church began a serious effort to organize the efforts of local communities into viable churches with both national and international foci. Bishop J. J. Clinton sent five men to the South to accomplish these goals. One of the men, James W. Hood, is remembered for his aggressive leadership and

⁸ J. Clinton Hoggard, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Organized 1796. A Bicentennial Commemorative History* (Charlotte, NC: AME Zion Publishing House, 1998).

great work in North Carolina, particularly in Washington and in New Bern. He upheld the rights of the Black congregation in selecting their own pastors and representing their own interests. Up to this point, affiliated White churches had retained authority over the business of Black churches in the South. After a particularly spiritual service in North Carolina, Hood presented a letter to the congregation. The letter was from Secretary of War Edwin Stanton: “The congregation of colored Methodist worshippers in Andrews Chapel in New Bern, North Carolina shall have the right to decide their own church relations and select their own pastor.” This decree affected all AME Zion Churches in the area and accelerated their autonomy.⁹

In the same year, the North Carolina conference was organized by Bishop Clinton and consisted of 12 ministers and 400 members. His work in Alabama was also fruitful as he organized the State Conference there. In 1877, there were 8,954 members and a year later there were 12,590 members with a reported four hundred preachers, local preachers, and exhorters.

This remarkable growth did not come without its tribulations. The Church and its preachers became the new targets of Klan terrorist activities, including the burning of churches and church schools and the imprisonment of pastors. These pastors were sustained by their faith in God and refused to be subordinates of men. Black preachers enlightened and strengthened their member churches in the face of persecution by the Klan by drawing heavily from the New Testament.

Terrorist groups were nothing compared to the growth of the AME Zion Church. In 1856, the Zion General Conference set up the British North American annual

⁹ Ibid.

Conference embracing New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Bermuda, and Cape Breton. An Annual Conference was established in Africa in 1883. The London-Birmingham Conference was organized in 1971, establishing the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in England. The AME Zion Church continues to work toward improved education, missionary opportunities, and religious scholarship around the world. With over one million members and 3,000 congregations in the United States alone and 141 annual conferences in twelve Episcopal Districts worldwide, the AME Zion Church is certainly making a difference.¹⁰

¹⁰ William J. Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Reality of the Black Church* (Charlotte, NC: AME Zion Publishing House, 1974).

CHAPTER 2

BROWNSVILLE AME ZION CHURCH

The Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is located across from Howard Houses—ten buildings, all thirteen stories tall. Many of the people come out to participate in the educational component and other activities that the church holds, but they are not regular participants of the worship services. As stated Brownsville section of Brooklyn, NY is home to the largest concentration of public housing developments in the entire nation, with an average high school graduation rate of only 27% and a school dropout rate of 39%. The church leadership does not understand its role in addressing this problem. We must first understand how the community became this way. Was it something that happened overnight or was it a problem that went unaddressed? And if it was not addressed then we must state the fact that it was simply neglect. When situations are neglected then they will proliferate and continue to thrive and breed hatred and contempt for the very society that let this happen in the Brownsville community. Then when we observe the fact that the Brownsville is left alone with unaddressed issues and is under-represented, we then must bear the responsibility that we too, assisted in establishing this antagonistic attitude in this society. This is the biblical question asked by Cain to God (Gen 4: 9)¹¹. After Cain had murdered his brother Abel God asked him where his brother was. Cain answered, “I know not; am I my brother's keeper?” Cain’s unwillingness to accept responsibility for his brother showed contempt for God. Cain’s

¹¹ All biblical references are from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

crime and denial of that act is the denial that we placed on the Brownsville Community. This is the very act that we have done through the neglecting of the people in the Brownsville Howard Housing in Brooklyn, New York. We lack the understanding that we are our brothers' keeper. In the New Testament we find Jesus giving a similar parable of the Good Samaritan

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have' (Luke 10: 25-37).

This deed that the Samaritan did later became one of the greatest acts of love. It is seen as our bound and spiritual duty to address this act with compassion and at the same time to view it our mission globally. When we observe the position of the Good Samaritan as humanitarians we have come to understand the fact that they enjoy volunteering for worthy causes. They feel that they have a moral obligation to assist others who are less fortunate than themselves. There appears to be a thin line between the humanitarian, morally ethical and theological for they both seemly have a strong desire to assisting persons in need. This duty of caring for our neighbors as ourselves was the expression of Jesus as He poured out Himself—the *kenosis*. Jesus' love is expressed in

'Love thy neighbor as thyself and love thy enemies.' Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matt 22:36-40).

Jesus emptied Himself as a demonstration of His love toward humankind. We too, must bear the burdens of the poor and underrepresented. In the *Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor* Leonardo Boff who is an internationally recognized theologian declared,

The earth is ill, first the most threatened of nature's creates today are the poor: 79% of humankind lives in the immense and poor South; 1 billion people live in the state of absolute poverty; 3 billion (out of 5.3 billion) do not have enough to eat; 60 million die of hunger every year; and 1.4 million young people under fifteen years of age die each year as a result of hunger-caused diseases. He further stated that, the state of the world is connected to our own state of mind. If the world is ill, that is a sign that our psyche is also ill. Aggression against nature and the will to dominate exist because visions, archetypes and emotions that lead to exclusion and violence are at work within the human psyche. There is an internal ecology just as surely as there is an external ecology, and they mutually condition each other.¹²

If we then address the aforementioned situation in the Brownsville and if not treated it will surely escalate to a staggering number of people that are ill and we too, are ill for we fail to see and address the problems. Our lack of sensitivity breeds contempt not just for them but for ourselves as well.

This very essence could be what brought Jesus to humankind's rescue? Karl Barth is often regarded as the greatest Protestant theologian of the twentieth century. He speaks about the emptying of Jesus, the *kenosis*. We must agree or at least acknowledge that Barth's work touched upon an age-old question of humankind of the Creator in His infinite wisdom. Literally emptying in Greek, *kenosis* is a theological notion signifying the Christian belief that in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth God empties out the divine selfhood in humble self-giving love to the world. This interpretation of deity has been inspired especially by reflection on the life and crucifixion of Jesus in whom Christians believe the fullness of God resides. In a letter to the Philippians, St. Paul cites an early Christian hymn that pictured Jesus as being "in the form of God," yet as one who forsook this lofty status and became a "slave" (Phil 2:5-11). Through the humiliation of being crucified, Jesus emptied (*ekenosen*) himself completely; for this reason, Philippians

¹² Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 1-2.

continues, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” Here Lordship somehow coincides with absolute self-emptying love

Subsequent theological reflection has often, though not always or consistently, interpreted the text of Philippians to imply that in Jesus the very being of God is what is “emptied out.” At times theologies have even gone to the extreme of interpreting the notion of *kenosis* to mean that God, in pouring out the divine substance, literally ceases to be God. The more accepted view, however, is that in God’s self-abandoning incarnation in Jesus, who for Christians became the crucified and risen Christ, the ultimate ground and sustainer of the universe is revealed decisively as absolute selflessness and limitless compassion (co-suffering). Both Barth and Wright affirm the traditional (and dare I say contextual) sense of this text; that is, that the ground of Jesus’ person, the ground of his humanity is God self. As Barth elaborates further on the implications of this, one of those has to do with the way this is perceived by those of us creatures who are confronted by this God who became human; for Barth—according to Hunsinger—what has happened in Christ is not an ontic (at the level of his ‘being’ the Son of the Father, eternally) change, but instead, because of this veiling and/or limiting of himself in human form, there is a noetic challenge that occurs. When we, as humans, encounter Jesus, we might superficially perceive that Jesus is simply another human, and might fail to recognize the reality, that far greater than simply being human (which he is fully), he is God-self, Light of light. And yet God in his own self-determined freedom, and gracious outlook, is willing to be mis-taken by the many (the ‘broad road’) if only to be recognized by the few (those who ‘have eyes to see and ears to hear’).¹³

In viewing the above with emptying-out of Jesus the self-denial of Himself we then must come full circle to who we are and whom do we serve. Should we become self-serving so that we are able to actualize the total impact of life and all that it has to offer?

Howard Thurman declares in his writings that we are more than our physical-being. “As a man he did not happen. He was born; he has a name; he has a mother tongue; he belongs to a nation; he is born into some kind of faith. In addition to all of

¹³ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to The Romans*, trans. Edwyn Hoyskyns (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933); and Karl Barth and N.T. Wright, “Side by Side on Philippians 2:5-11 and the ‘Emptying,’” <http://growrag.wordpress.com/2013/07/31/karl-barth-and-n-t-wright-side-by-side-on-philippians-25-11-and-the-emptying> (accessed February 22, 2014).

these he exists in some curious way as a person independent of all facts. There is an intensely private world, all his own; it is intimate, exclusive, sealed.”¹⁴

Yes we were born with certain givens yet, somehow along the way we either lost our identity or we were robbed of it. If we have lost our identities how did we lose it, when did we lose it, and why did we lose it? If someone robbed us of it how and when did it happen? Therefore, if the earth is ill then are we to deny our illness. The earth is ill, first the most threatened of natures’ creations today are the poor: in other words, how did the poor become poor? Who declares that they were/are poor? How do we determine who are the haves and the have-nots? The first step to healing is confession however, if we are not aware that we have created a society of have-nots, and we are immune to our actions then who will declare that we create societies which propagate the needy and poor. It is due to the lack of proper nurturing and positioned in deplorable situations such as being under-represented, displaced, with few affordable houses, and lacking accountability toward each other et cetera. Rebecca Todd Peters, *In Search of the Good Life* states, “

The social well-being of people as what constitute human flourishing ultimately, we are called by God to strive for social justice for the entire earth community. One of the most prominent and challenging themes of the biblical witness and the Christian tradition is to seek to live in this world as if we were already in the kingdom. One of the dangers of Christianity is spiritualizing the hardships of this world; poverty, disease, and death can be perversely denied, dismissed, or ignored by Christians who are focused on enduring this world as if it were a mere steppingstone to the next. Our spirituality should not call us out of this world; rather it should fill us with strength and fortitude to fight for change and justice in this world.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 110.

¹⁵ Rebecca Todd Peters, *In the Search of the Good Life* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 29.

Whether we agree or not with Peters' views regarding our responsibility toward others in its entirety but we must and do agree as Christians that we should live and coexist in peace and well-being for the whole of society. Otherwise we would cease as Christians to support home missions, and world missions would not enter into our thoughts. If as a people are we destined to suffer, it is because in our suffering that we experience humility. My rhetorical question would be why do humans suffer and even further, should any living thing suffer? Who has come into the world and not suffered at some time or other?

Boff speaks of the passion of the world and the cosmic Christ.

The cosmic Christ is also crucified from the beginning of the world. He suffers with all who suffer and die. Christian mystic like the great Julian of Norwich (1342-1413) have perceived the connection between Christ's cosmic passion and the passion of the world...Christ's solidarity descends into hell of the contradictory condition of evolution. In Jesus he suffers the full force of human and cosmic evil, to say as the creed does; that he descended into hell is to express the cruel reality of human death, solitude, and helplessness.¹⁶

When we observe the Brownsville and the reports from New York Housing Authority, we should not be surprised but we should become alarmed. That we who wear the seal of Jesus Christ, declare that we are crucified with Christ, and suffer as He suffered, will permit this travesty to take place in this community—it is an insult to our integrity. Now that we know, what are we going to do about it?

Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church will endeavor to continue with the food programs; we will continue with the clothing mission; we will continue to institute voter registration and the GED program. We implore you to help those who are ill, abused, and helpless and so many whom are homeless. Join with us in the campaign

¹⁶ Boff, 181.

of awareness as we raise Brownsville's standards to a higher standard. "Zion is calling each of us to a higher standard." Yes Zion is called to a higher calling and that call is to stand up for we are our brothers' keeper. We are only as healthy as our neighbor. If the earth is sick then the earth is only reflective of us. Who do we really say that we are? If we are born of Christ and we suffer as Christ I then conclude "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Phil 3:10).

When we view Boff in his quest of the *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* we clearly understand that he labored over most of his discoveries. For example, Boff speaks of the passion of the world and the cosmic Christ, "

The cosmic Christ is also crucified from the beginning of the world. He suffers with all who suffer and die. Christian mystics like the great Julian of Norwich (1342-1413) have perceived the connection between Christ's cosmic passion and the passion of the world...Christ's solidarity descends into hell of the contradictory condition of evolution. In Jesus he suffers the full force of human and cosmic evil, to say as the creed does; that he descended into hell is to express the cruel reality of human death, solitude, and helplessness.¹⁷

In order to make this theological foundational truth and relevant our Christology must be sound and our beliefs must be placed in our hearts. "As Christians we must believe that Christ died for us and not just for us but for the sins of the Living God...Consider the insight into God that emerged on the European continent blasted to shreds by Second World War. Million dead, cities in ruins, food distribution disrupted the

¹⁷ Boff, 180.

economy devastated: the suffering did not end with the armistice but radiated into the subsequent years like shock waves”¹⁸

Johnson ascertains the theological foundation of the crucified God of compassion. When people are going along fine they will never take on the beliefs of a savior who came into the world to save the world; but when trouble comes their cry is where is God? She questions the theodicy of human’s belief: “Both Jewish and Christian thinkers who grappled with this issue did so against the background of a long tradition reaching back to the Bible itself”¹⁹

As Christians we all know that our Christology becomes questionable when we are going through hardship. Church growth comes out of this foundational truth. In other words, where is God for the persons who have no voice and no one else is willing to speak on their behalf? What happens when the politicians take control of entire communities and the communities become intimidated by the threats? This appears to have happened in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn. We all studied history and know that many of these persons were removed by a lack of Jobs. Many southerners came north, especially persons of color. They had no choice. Omar M. McRoberts in *Street of Glory* stated,

The great migration brought about change in the religious landscape of urban North for beyond the expansion, proliferation, and relocation of existing churches and the efforts of national denominational and local congregations to respond to the new institutional demands placed upon them. Uprooted but not without roots. The migrants brought cultural gifts through an appreciation of this religious treasure was not always evident. By the end of the great migration era African American religious cultural

¹⁸ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 40.

¹⁹ Ibid., 51.

in northern cities was much more diverse and resistant to easy generalization than at the end of the nineteenth century”²⁰

One of the first things one needs to internalize is the fact that no one migrates from their place of residence without legitimate reasons, usually it has to do with the economy. Even slavery was predicated upon the economy. Economics is the basis of all the greed. Greed is deadly, and causes so much upheaval in the world.

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²⁰ Omar M. McRoberts, *Streets of Glory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 16.

CHAPTER 3

THE DISENFRANCHISED CHURCH

The invisibility of this church is so profound that if it closed tomorrow no one from the community would notice that it is no longer there. There are congregants who come and go as if they are solely interested in themselves. Many take extensive vacations and return as though they were gone only for a week. There is little concern for the functioning of the church during their absence. Some of the congregants come and sleep during the sermons. Others come and are busy taking care of trivial matters. This church upon my arrival was closed by the New York Buildings Department as a danger to the occupants. The members became alarmed and wanted the city to reopen the building although their lack of proper caring had brought about this occurrence. After many hours of toiling and undue stress the church was reopened. The congregants were overjoyed and continued their praises to the Almighty God for a while.

Some of the congregants that attend the church reside in the Howard Housing Complex and they are a part of the statistics that the church assessed during this study. Nevertheless it does not appear to concern them in wanting to improve their spiritual growth. Campaigning for educational awareness seems to be the most logical approach. The GED was met with great enthusiasm, many of them completed the program and received their high school diplomas and continued to pursue college degrees in nursing education and other vocations of interests.

As a theologian I strongly feel that education is the tool that will enable many of them to obtain a higher life-style for themselves and their family-members. Evangelizing is wonderful but we must give more than words. We must give of ourselves as demonstrated with the “Good Samaritan.” We cannot continue to grow and become ambassadors for Christ unless we emulate Christ. We have been given a mandate: “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’” (Matt 28:18-20).

In the Brownsville Community there is a church on every corner yet the high school drop-out rate is 39%. The church must address this grave concern. My question is where are we? And what are we doing about this problem. The Brownsville community must become cognizant of this situation. When we say as a church that we are serving God and we see the situation in this community as bleak as it is, then we must concur that we are not serving the true and living God. These astonishing statistics show that the church leadership in the neighborhood does not understand its role in addressing this problem. If this issue is not addressed, the educational level will continue to decline and the dropout rate will continue to increase. The AME Zion Church in Brownsville will continue to campaign for educational literacy awareness programs. We must campaign to prepare the church leaders to meet these needs and become involved in raising the awareness of the Brownsville community of its responsibilities toward the educational needs of Howard Housing Community in Brownsville. Instead of the Brownsville

African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church remaining a mediocre church she will make the much needed shift in become a flowering church that will meet her obligations to the community. Thus, she will become proud in emulating the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Upon my arrival I found that very little had been done readying the church community to face the apathy that was quite obvious in the community, e.g. many of the neighborhood community persons would use the church—grounds as a restroom, they came and defecated on the church grounds. Often they would stop their cars and walk into the church grounds and relieve themselves. I would approach them with a quiet but firm tone inquiring if they would like to come into the sanctuary and have prayer. Or did they need clothing and give them clothing to wear. Many requested money for rent and or food. Desperate people do desperate things. While campaigning toward educational literacy awareness, the church has continued distributing food, clothing, furniture, appliances, and spiritual tracts; and the GED and voter's registration programs have been on-going. The community is slowly coming to the sanctuary and becoming involved in the events.

The Site Team was invited to come and do a walk through in the community. Those that attended found it invigorating. While they did not express to me their overall feeling I observed their compassion as they spoke with them. I have made it a personal endeavor to evangelize with the neighborhood community once a month, sometimes twice, for I believe that faith does come by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).

The disenfranchised church is a church that is out of touch with God's word and they have seen so much hypocrisy they are no longer interested in what the church has to

offer to the community. In reading *The Come Back Churches* by Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, both refer to the church in crisis, particularly the churches in North America. If the church is in crisis and we as theologians fail to see our role then we too, contribute to the distress that the church is going through. We are able to see a bride in distress; yet, we are helpless to come to the bride's aid. In Acts 20:28, Paul exhorted the elders of the church at Ephesus to be "shepherds of the church" (1 Corinthians 1:14), meaning that they

Should care for and guard the church. Paul encouraged the leaders in Corinth to edify, buildup, and strengthen the church through worship. Without fail, Paul wrote of his prayers for the church. For these reasons, we're passionate about helping the hundreds of thousands of North American churches in plateau or decline. They may be a bride in distress, but they are still the bride of Christ.²¹

This passage reminds me of Ephesian the six chapter where Paul encourages the church at Ephesus to stand having done all they can do just stand, by this I understand that we are to stand solely on the word of God. The question that comes to mind is that as a bride of Christ in distress how then can we lead others to Christ. If we are wounded soldiers how can we assist the disenfranchised and the unchurched to Christ? "But I have prayed for you, Simon that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32). Here we find Jesus in a teaching moment. Peter (Simon) does not quite understand that he is going to be faced with opposition where he will deny Jesus; but Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. Yes, we too, like Peter will be faced with opposition and God knows that we will need strengthening, and only God can give the gift of strength. Prayer is the only weapon that we have against the adversary. Yet, prayer is more than enough.

²¹ Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2007), 2.

One of the factors that we must contend with is the method in which we embrace the body of Christ. That is, do we really believe that God is a rewarder of those that meticulously seek after righteousness? How can we diligently seek God without getting into the inspired word of God? We must become biblically sound, utilizing spiritual authority by teaching and preaching from the OT as well as the NT. We must believe that faith comes by hearing the word of God. How could David depict Psalm 22 with such accuracy while having had no revelation—knowledge in other words? If we only heard it and had never been introduced to the New Testament, we would have not caught the essence of the total meaning of what David was writing. David had never met Jesus; yet he was able to describe the crucifixion as if he was living in the days of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Words are able to transcend the ultimate truth throughout all generations.

We cannot become effective unless we ourselves are equipped. We cannot equip ourselves but through the Holy Spirit; with prayers and supplications we are made ready to meet the Groom. We then will do as Habakkuk Chapter 2: we must have the vision and write the vision clearly; we must first understand our mission and teach the disciples so that they too, will understand the mission of saving souls—that is, kingdom building. Stetzer and Dodson stated, “So, then what do missional churches look like? They are more than the characteristics... they are incarnational missional churches; they are deeply entrenched in their communities. They are not focused on their facilities, but on living, demonstrating and offering biblical community to a lost world. An incarnational church functions as the body of Christ, because it represents the presence of Christ in a community.”²² We as theologians must be able to meet people where they are and

²² Ibid, 6.

understand their culture. That is, they may look, dress, speak and behave differently but they are still God's creation. Nelson Searcy's book *Fusion* stated, we must first understand assimilation. Many, many years ago people came from countries all over the world and landed on Ellis Island in America. Others came as slaves without having the freedom to make rational decisions for themselves; nevertheless they are here. While we are inclusive of the various, we are Christians. Therefore, we as Christians must lead the way in equipping the disenfranchised, the unchurched in assimilating. But how can we teach what we do not know? We must rely on the move of the Holy Spirit to do the teaching and we simply follow the invoking of the Holy Spirit.

We have not taught our staff or congregation to serve guests with grace and hospitality. We have not internalized the gravity of our burden to reflect God's character in the way we treat them. We do not have a plan in place to encourage their continual return. We are not prepared understanding the significance of proper assimilation may require you to change the way you think about service. God has not only given the responsibility of being hospitable to His guests, but He has also given us the perfect example of how to go about it. Jesus came to the earth to serve, not to be served.²³

In many instances when guests come and are served there appears a blank stare in the faces of the congregants. There is very little smiling and a show of willingness to serve the guests. The joy of the Lord is our strength but at times such as these our character displays contempt as we serve. It is difficult to tell whether our guests experienced the warmth that Jesus had and showed it at all times to everyone He encountered. In no situation was Jesus' attitude ever unpleasant even when He threw the money-changers out of the temple. Observe Jesus' attitude in how He demonstrated kindness toward the man at the pool of Bethesda; look at the compassion that Jesus gave

²³ Nelson Searcy, *Fusion* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1973), 43.

the man. I wondered if we were given the same condition what our response would be: Would we walk by or would we stop and help?

One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, ‘Do you want to get well?’ ‘Sir,’ the invalid replied, ‘I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk’ (John 5:5-8).

Searcy states, “The difference between people who exercise initiative and those who don’t is literally the difference between night and day.”²⁴ Many persons had witnessed this man but none were willing to aid him until Jesus came and served him with gladness. As theologians we must look for meaningful ways to equip the staff and congregation to serve. Serving requires prayer—pray for humility that we will be equipped with the fruits of the Spirit and be endowed with endurance and patience. Serve with humility, serve with a glad heart. We need to examine how we really feel when we are serving others. It gives us pleasure or sometimes it may be uncomfortable; nevertheless we must work the work until we are called into eternity. I am reminded of John Chapter 21, where Jesus is having a conversation with Peter. Jesus asked the question “Peter do you love me”? Peter responded, “Yea Lord you know that I do.” “Feed my Lambs.” After three times Peter becomes disgruntled that Jesus would continue to pursue the question. Jesus continues to pursue that question today with us. “Do you love me?” “Feed my sheep.”

Stetzer and Dodson put it this way and I concur that we need three faith factors to have a successful church: (1) renewed belief in Jesus Christ and the mission of the church, (2) renewed attitude for servant hood, and (3) more strategic prayer effort.

²⁴ Ibid, 159.

Thus, missional leaders and churches are ones that are thinking and acting like missionaries. They understand their culture, lead biblically faithful and culturally relevant churches, and think in missionary ways about their context. The end result may be traditional, contemporary, emerging, ethnic or some other approach. Renewed attitude for servanthood. We are then making a choice to function by our preferences and the internal cultures which we create. Sadly, churches that serve their preferred culture do not reach the unchurched through more strategic prayer effort. Some churches are praying churches. Comeback leaders also underscored the impact of strategic prayer efforts as a key to renewal when they mentioned: preaching and outreach praying fervently; different attitudes in praying; started praying for God's serious leadership; being awakened, etcetera.²⁵,

Renewed belief does not have a comprehensive plan on effective church leadership. What Stetzer and Dodson appear to offer is that we must be open to change. We must be willing to take critical evaluations of our ministry and observe what bring positive outcome. Persuasiveness may not achieve the ultimate goal that we want to obtain. Paul stated it this way

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want (Phil. 4:12).

The Aramaic Bible in Plain English translation is

I know how to be humbled, I know also what it is to abound; I am trained in everything and in all things, in fullness and in hunger, in excess and in poverty.

When we really understand the validity of this message we understand dying to self. As we examine ourselves we must ask critical questions of self. (1) Have I prayed and presented this before the Lord and asked for discernment? (2) Have I done all that I can do? (3) How would Jesus respond to this situation? (4) Who is the Bishop of this person's soul? (5) Is Jesus calling this person as He called me? When we are confronted with questions we must be honest with ourselves—as James required followers who

²⁵ Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 67, 68.

desire to emulate Jesus Christ. We must look in the mirror and see ourselves as Jesus sees us. We know that anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror (James 1:23). Even when we view the late Michael Jackson

Man in the Mirror

I'm Starting With The Man In The Mirror
I'm Asking Him To Change His Ways
And No Message Could Have Been Any Clearer
If You Wanna Make The World A Better Place
(If You Wanna Make The World A Better Place)
Take A Look At Yourself, And Then Make A Change
(Take A Look At Yourself, And Then Make A Change)²⁶

What a profound message. It seems that the secular world sometimes receives God's message before the theologians. Had the church listened to Jackson perhaps we would have been reaching the unreachable. What will it take for us to change? Do we really want to change? Are we capable of change? I believe that we are. You see there is one thing that is true we cannot teach what we do not know, nor can we lead where we have not gone. The first thing we must be willing to do is "take look in the mirror."

Strategic prayer effort requires that we act according to the word of God. In Acts 2 we find that the disciples were obedient to God's word. They were told by Jesus to go to Jerusalem and tarry there and they did. "They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:3-4).

²⁶ Glen Ballard, Siedah Garrett, and Michael Jackson, *Man in the Mirror*, Secaucus, NJ: Warner Bros., 1987.

Perhaps one of the reasons our witnessing is weak we do not possess the ability to utilize the Holy Spirit in its entirety. In many instances we may actually be afraid of the power of the Holy Spirit. As theologians many of us may have compromised the Holy Spirit and we believe that we have little power to be effective. Seemingly, we do not exercise that which we have been given; that is, the authority to call those things that are not as though they were. You see we really are not sure that we can call things into existence. God has given us power and authority; not to utilize the power and authority means we are living beneath our privilege. How do we spread the Good News?

How do we as theologians empower the disenfranchised church into committing themselves to a power and force that is greater than what they have ever experienced? Searcy in *Fusion* cites this lack of involvement as “sticky situations.” He states, “This Sunday, churches across America will be filled with transient attenders, those churchgoers who come in a few minutes late, head straight to their seats, participate in worship, listen attentively to the message and duck out without talking to anyone when the service is over.”²⁷

Why is there such a tremendous fear of assimilation from the attenders? I agree with Searcy they will come but they will not get involved nor will they make a commitment even to themselves. Many may have had prior experiences but not all. There is an intrinsic belief for many attenders that all they need to do is to hear the message but not to become involved with the entire components of the church gathering. These attenders merely come to hear but they do not come to participate. This is why they show-up once the service starts. I call this the disenfranchised church. Yes I agree with

²⁷ Searcy, *Fusion*, 119.

Searcy this is sticky, but we cannot leave these attenders where they are because we are on a mission for God. And our mission is to upset the world. “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins (Isaiah 58:1). As theologians how can we do it unless we are equipped with the Spirit of God? From the beginning God’s inspired word has reminded us “It is not good for man to be alone... (Genesis 2:18). Yet these churchgoers feel that they are carrying out God’s mandate by simply attending church. Many are not concerned with strengthening their brother as Jesus instructed Simon. Theologians know that we must pray at all times and not take anything for granted. Jesus informed Simon “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you Simon that your faith may not fail” (Luke 5:32,33a). We, much like Peter, believe that we are ready to go with the Lord but like Peter we have not with stood the test of time. When the enemy really comes in as a flood and attacks, many of us are overcome with fear and distress. Even though we believe we may never be placed where we find ourselves we quickly internalize that it is only through prayer and pursuing God that we make it. We are we then able to rise above our dilemma. This is then what we determine is a faith walk.

Faith just does not shoulder itself upon us but it comes through praying and pursuing God. Seeking wisdom and acknowledging that we just don’t know what we may have thought we knew. How does faith grow but through trial and error, in places where you know not where to turn? Nor do we know who to turn to in times of distress. It is during the testing times that our faith grows. It was only when Job was in his dilemma that he turned to God. Job was given the opportunity to have a conversation with God (Job 38:1-42:6) although God gave Job the opportunity to talk Job did not fully

understand God nor God's creation. It is with humiliation that Job succumbs to the fact that He is no match for God's thoughts are above his. We too, succumb to the fact that God methods are not and cannot be equivalent to ours.

Paul Tillich in *Dynamics of Faith* contends that "it is not only the popular mind which distorts the meaning of faith. Behind it lie philosophical and theological thoughts which in a more refined way also miss the meaning of faith."²⁸

The infallibility of faith becomes dangerous in that persons like Jim Jones in the Jonestown incident where many lives were lost because they dared not question the faith of one person. Although they knew that he was wrong in his thinking, many of his followers escaped but many more died at the hands of Jim Jones' ultimate beliefs. Then if the community and the language fail to give proper guidance and there is no room for doubt where can one find resource and solace for their soul. Jesus spoke to Thomas regarding his doubting faith. If Thomas' faith had not been radical then we never would have known that there was doubt in the social movement and in the community of Jesus. The itinerant lifestyle of the disciples became less and less attractive as they traveled throughout Asia Minor. It appears that after Thomas saw Jesus's hands where the nails had pierced, he regained his faith and told the other disciples

"Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). Observe the different language of faith after Thomas developed a relationship with Jesus. I believe it is only through our doubting of faith that there emerges a deeper sense of faith. There is something within each of us that the apostle Paul talked about in the fourth chapter of Ephesians where he described it as a measure of consciousness. In this particular instance

²⁸ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper Collins, 1958), 33.

I am speaking of faith being synonymously connected to consciousness. Carl Jung calls it deep within the archive of our souls therein lie faith. “I am astonished, disappointed, pleased with myself. I am distressed, depressed, rapturous. I am all these things at once and cannot add up the sum.”²⁹

This faith is waiting to grow within us like a garden and it is through trial and error we test and arrive at true faith. Faith that we possess is locked into many areas of our being. I believe that Jesus dealt with this in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He was praying that God would take the bitter cup from Him. It was only after Jesus had drunk from the bitter cup that His strength was renewed. It is only when we go through trials of distress that our strength is renewed and stronger. We are always under-construction for improvement in character building.

The late Bishop G. E. Patterson said, in *Building Faith & Perfecting Character*

From the beginning of time, it was in the mind of God to place the character within the personality of man. Many times the integrity of a ministry rests solely upon its leadership, namely the pastor. It is his integrity that propels the church from one level to the next. Being anointed, educated, or even sound in scripture is simply not enough; you must have good character accompanying these attributes as an ingredient to success... say what you mean and mean what you say, it will provoke a revival in your heart and mind that can lead to excellence as a believer. Integrity is credibility, and accountability.³⁰

It appears from all indications from the late Bishop that God spoke primary to the male gender and not to female perhaps this is where a large amount of fallacy lies. In my

²⁹ C. G. Jung, “Until you make the unconscious conscious,” <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/44379-until-you-make-the-unconscious-conscious-it-will-dire> (accessed February 20, 2014).

³⁰ Patrick L. Wooden, Sr., *Building Faith & Perfecting Character* (Durham, NC: Blooming House, 1982), 9.

heart I believe that the Creator spoke to all flesh male and female. Perhaps Joel in the second chapter heard the same drum-beat that I heard that is

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come. You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed. Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed. And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:1-2. 26-29).

What do we do as preachers and teachers of the word of God? Do we only exhort that which we are comfortable with, or are we willing to travel into those areas that are most uncomfortable? Whether we want to admit it or not we who are the leaders of the Gospel of Jesus have caused much despair, how will we address this situation? I believe that Satan stands at the threshold of the church ready to push anything and everything that be not godly. Idols are everywhere waiting to expose themselves rather than the truth about God. Revelation declares “he that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit of God is saying to the church” (Rev2:7). Is the church in distress because she chooses to hear only what is profitable to her. What if we as the church would stand for righteousness? Would the gathering and the assembling of the saints fail to show up on the scheduled dates of worship? Yes I agree with Patterson the spiritual growth of the church lies in the leadership’s hands. What then are we prepared to do are we like unto the leprosy in the book of 2Kings “If we say, ‘We’ll go into the city’ --the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let’s go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die” (2 Kings 2:7). You see

the church is suffering from a slow bacterial that is slowly attempting to destroy the church but it will not prevail. Jesus has paid it all. Jesus did it while we were yet enemies. He died for us.

There is a famine in the body of Christ, this famine is trying to destroy the church but it will not work. If we prevail with integrity and our character is implacable we will succeed. Wooden states in *Building Faith & Perfecting Character* in this manner,

Walk uprightly and work and work righteousness; speak the truth in your heart; do not backbite with your tongue; do no evil to your neighbor; do not take up a reproach against your neighbor; view evil with contempt; honor everyone that fear the Lord; endure pain with gladness; serve as a stewards in God's vineyard; do not commit wrongness against the innocent. God delights at the opportunity of working on anyone who is open to growing in character. His character message is the closest to His heart because He wants others to see Him through us. He's not looking for perfect people who never make mistakes. He's looking for teachable, honest people who will grow up to their mistakes and will keep their word.³¹

How does one walk upright and work righteousness without faith in God?

Trusting what is right can become a guessing tool unless we are rooted in the word of God. This calls for studying and meditation both night and day in the word of God. Many of us have "good intentions" but they are our intentions not God's. God's ways are not like ours therefore, we must study God's so that we will become familiar with the way God moves in various situations and circumstances. In the book of Isaiah, he declares who can fathom the ways of the Lord? "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom" (Isaiah 40:28). God is the Creator of

³¹ Ibid., 26.

all living and non-living things. One must constantly examine oneself against the word of God and we must be in sync with the word of God at all times.

The disenfranchised church must always be alert to the forces that exist in the community and be willing to undergo difficult circumstances. In other words how do we who are church leaders change church's culture from missions minded, to missions, active? I believe we accomplish this task through demonstrating within ourselves the change. We are the agent of change in *The Quest* by Dr. David Herndon where he addresses discernment ministries. One of the questions that he inquires is what a missions-active church looks like? Herndon states that a missions-active church

Once we understand that God's purpose and plan is the redemption of mankind through Jesus Christ we can begin to ask ourselves, 'How does God want to use me in executing His plan?' If I am called to be a witness, an ambassador, where am I to be stationed? To which people am I to witness? Those same questions exist for churches. While we are called to be a light to the people, what kind of light are we to be? Are we to be a streetlight, shining brightly in the dark for a limited radius? Or are we called to be a headlight, shining God's glory as we journey? Could it be that be that God calls the church to be both?³²

If we are to believe that God has called the churches to be both then how can we minister effectively to the body of Christ? I believe very firmly that we must love people. Love them as we believe that God loves us. I believe that God really loves me and that His love is all-consuming, God loves me. Whenever, I see another creation of God I see the love that poured out of self into another. The *kenosis* concept of God's divinity of emptying out of self overrides anything that I could ever image. The Apostle John's illustration of 3:16 "For God so loved the World..." We too, must demonstrate our love toward humanity.

³² Davis Herndon, *The Quest* (Lexington, KY: Discernment Ministries, 2011), 13.

Accordingly, Dr. Herndon states “The great truth is unless a person yields to the Spirit’s power in his life he will be of no use to the Kingdom of God.”³³ I concur with this statement because unless we who possess the Spirit of God we cannot accomplish the task at hand. The truth of the matter is that most of us state that we are committed but the commitment comes with conditions in other words; I give this if God will give me that (whatever we request of God). Yet, God’s love for us is and remains constant and unconditional. We must therefore be the salt of the earth. This salt must have savory, and not for persons that perhaps resemble us but persons that look, talk, act difference nevertheless we must love them with all of our hearts. The songwriter penned it thusly, in 1920 “This little heart of mine I going let it shine everywhere I go I am going to let it shine” Harry Dixon Loes (1895–1965).

One of the fundamental aspects of church growth is casting a vision. How do we cast the vision so that we continue to hold the interest of the congregation? The first thing that I would do is develop a bucket list of the essential strategies of creating and implementing the first strategy would be to re-examine my spirituality and remove all hinder of personal weights. Making certain that my personal commitment is aimed to do the mission as God leads me. This would require me to make sure that my character is implacable with integrity to stand for righteousness. It is crucial that I must be willing to go wherever God leads me. Availability is one of the first attributes. Most importantly we must realize that there is no perfect vessel for we all come with bruises, we are wounded soldiers. Wounded but willing. There are many who feel that they need no training just the desire to help but I strongly feel that one needs both I am reminded of Second

³³ Ibid., 27.

Timothy “Study to show thyself approval, worker man need not be ashamed...”(1 Timothy. 2:15).

There will be growing pains on both sides. It takes mature disciples in both churches to be able to work together and to work through differences while respecting each other's position. While the complexities of each local and people's personalities prevent a fixed time table to produce a mature church, a good plan will provide benchmarks to be met by both parties. This will help to prevent overly dependent children from never leaving the nest as well as over protective parents who stifle and development of their offspring. Growth by reproduction is natural by-product of health for living organisms. There are few things that will demonstrate the health of a congregation so much as the ability, willingness and readiness of a church to produce offspring.³⁴

Congregations for the most part become a comfortable organism; most congregations are complacent and really are not interested in growing. One of the most important observations that I now have is the famous quote “if it not broken, don't fix it” Thus, if the congregation is satisfied and they don't desire to engage with other souls and you force them to, they will resent and withdrawal from their responsibilities including their tithes. They feel that the church will not be able to sustain itself. There was one church that refused to pay the pastor's salary because he refused to do as they instructed him to do. So the only money that they had no say over was the benevolent offerings.

Mature congregations are not easy to find for most of them require love and more love. There is an old saying that “one must love the hell out of them.” This requires praying, fasting and training. I was one co-pastoring a church where I had to speak to the congregation about developing a teachable spirit. At first few received the advice but as time continued they all began coming to Bible Study desiring to learn. This strategy came with much praying and determination on my part. Ongoing forgiveness was necessary

³⁴ Ibid., 94.

because as the leader of the congregation your heart must be in the right place all the time.

Dr. Herndon states, “The first step in preparing on self spiritually is to begin by cleaning one’s heart from sin. A great way to do this is to pray the prayer of David in Psalm 13. This is a dangerous prayer. It is not for the faint of heart. God’s Spirit will roam through our heart and minds and show us all our sinful action.”³⁵

Prayer is the key to the believer and faith unlocks the passage to our heart. This is the reason the Apostle Luke stated “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18: 1). We know that prayer changes circumstances. No matter what the situation is we should not faint, that is, we should not lose hope. Prayer makes the impossible, possible. It is through prayer that possibilities are birthed. It is through prayer that we learn faith and to hold fast to our faith for it is like a precious stone. I am reminded of the Apostle Paul when he spoke to the Romans Church he asked the question, shall we continue in sin, God forbade. We must become mature Christians, theologians and leaders of the inspired word of God.

Dr. Herndon concluded,

There is an awareness of and a burden for the lost that is common to all the churches. Some churches found this awareness through discipleship course. The members demonstrated a willingness to engage their neighborhoods, city and world with the gospel. The churches mission is the catalyst that drives each of these churches—their purpose and reason for being...different structures and forms of government, each have in common a burning desire to be on-mission with God.³⁶

³⁵ Ibid., 105.

³⁶ Ibid., 127.

The disenfranchised church is confronted with all of the above and not certain of how to rid oneself of all of the flaws. Many of the disenfranchised churches are purely burnt-out. I believe that many of them have tried so many painful efforts and not succeeded in accomplishing one successfully. One must build up one's stamina in the Holy Spirit to persevere. I am reminded of Jesus' conversation with the disciples while He was in the Garden of Gethsemane praying. Jesus informed them that the spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. So it is with our efforts. We must be willing to take the long haul no matter what we are confronted with. I believe one must be willing to encourage one's self in situations that appears to be hopeless. This is the time when one must speak over one's life and believe the words that you speak. We must rise to the occasion and become a David. In other words, encourage oneself.

The disenfranchised church and men seem to bring a perplexed proponent and consuming amount of frustration to the situation. How can one encourage the men who are disenfranchised? What do they literally want the pulpit to address so that their interest will be met? Most men will simply not attend. Others will attend but often nod or sleep during the sermons. One might be tempted to inquire whether the men are housed with the Holy Spirit. I believe that they are. I also believe that many perhaps address the fictitious man to man. You see when they are at a game that they can compete one on one; but when they attend church they must listen without interruption or response. It then becomes one-sided and they cannot relate. Many of the men know what the other is doing or what they think that the other is doing. The question that comes to mind: are men less spirited than women? I don't think so; I believe that God has equipped them both equally. However I do believe that women may have been trained as little girls and

may be more equipped and in tune to the Holy Spirit than most men. Perhaps women maybe more sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit than most men because they have been trained to assist others in need; simply because they are the nurturers of nature. In other words they housed the reproductive and the procreate attributes of procreation. There are clearly tasks that men cannot perform and there are tasks that women cannot perform. However, they both are necessary for the survival of humankind. When we view Genesis chapter one we find that creation was done in the first chapter but we have all been taught that the time of conception began with Genesis second chapter my question is why? “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). This verse of scripture only came to my attention when I became a scholar and began reading for myself. Then the rhetorical question is that the lie or the misguided truth came when man decided to distort the truth. You see as a scholar I then asked myself, if God created everything in the first book of Genesis why does man not deal with this premise of creation? Man only speak of “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being”(Genesis 2:7). My question is how many times does God create Man or mankind? Could this then be the fallacy of why men find it so difficult to attend church? It may not be the total reason but I believe it does attribute to a vital part of man’s psyche? In reading David Murrow *Why Men Hate Going to Church* he states, “The ideology of masculinity has replaced Christianity as the true religion of men. We live in a society with female religious and a male religion; Christianity, of various sorts, for women and non-masculine men and masculinity for

men³⁷” I believe that this too is a fallacy and does not hold to the real underlying truth. The real reason man and even women may not attend church is because of sin. We all know especially the believer of Jesus Christ that sin will place one in a state of denial. I firmly believe this is where Murrow is in his above statement; however the danger comes when others believe this to be factual and thinks that it is okay for men to believe one way and women another.

When God created humankind did God really place one above the other or did God create them to be co-dependent of each other? If we really believe that there is a masculine spirit and a feminine spirit are we to believe that God in the creation process created a dual creation. According to Murrow’s theory he states, “What do I mean by feminine and masculine spirit? Here is an example the world of sports is steeped in masculine spirit. The core values of sports are competition, achievement, and victory. On the other hand elementary education is steeped in the feminine spirit. Its core values are harmony, cooperation, and mature³⁸” The rationale that Murrow uses to is solely predicated upon a male dominant influence and has very little if any to do with male or female “spirit.” It all comes purely from the psychology of early childhood training. When little girls are born they are usually placed with a doll in their hands and little boys are given a truck or something that he must recreate with his hands. This is what sparks as unintentional as it may be is the breeding ground for the formative years in both male and female lives. Many know that early exposure is the dominant factors in most of life’s forces. Even plants and animals have many cross-breeds and come up with alternative

³⁷ David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*, (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2005), 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

lifestyles. If you place non-living objects with living objects it will remain non-living but if you place living objects with other living objects it will begin to grow and take on the characteristics of each other. For example; if a girl is nurtured by all boys she will tend to act as the boys. This is a given; of course, there are other variables that will come into play as well. There is an old adage that says if it quacks like a duck, it is a duck. I disagree—it may quack like a duck but it doesn't necessarily have to be a duck.

According to Murrow he states that there is a gender gap of church participation between men and women. According to him most worshippers are most likely to be black females. "The U.S. Congregational life survey concurs: While the U.S. population is split fairly evenly between men and women there are more women (61%) than men (39%) in the pews. This difference is found in every age category so that the women live longer than men does not explain the gender difference in religious participation."³⁹

Again I must differ with Murrow's reasons for not having more men in attendance is not that there are more women but statistics demonstrates that a large portion of men are behind bars. I suggest that if Murrow investigates the data closer than he has he will find that there are great numbers of men that are incarcerated. Perhaps this would give Marrow more leverage to state his assertions. However; will agree with Murrow to some extent regarding his findings; that there are a greater number of Black females in attendance in church than there are Black males. Again Black men and non-white males are arrested more frequently than white males. There are laws that place Black males in harms-way. For example: "stop-and-frisk;" "driving an expensive car;" and "driving through the wrong neighborhoods." "Even the case of the late Dr. Nelson Mandela who

³⁹ Ibid., 53.

was arrested and detained for twenty-seven years in the South Africa detention” We know that although t he was later exonerated of the alleged charges it did not take away the pain and humiliation of being without the basic-needs of life. All of which was due to a dual system of justice. A Black in a country where he was born before the White man came to live there; yet to be detained without receiving any legal justification as to why from the White man. Then there are the Black brothers who have married White females. Yes Black sisters too; have done so as well but the numbers for the brothers are staggering at a much higher rate.

Consequently Murrow states that biology teaches us that men and women differ biologically from each other. “Men’s brains are different from women’s brains; so say scientists. Men also have different levels of certain hormones than women. These biochemical dissimilarities cause the genders to behave differently on the job, at home, and in school. But the differences are particularly in church. When husband and wife walk into church, he is at an immediate disadvantage.”⁴⁰

If what Murrow states is correct, that is, that the creation of woman came from the man’s loin, all creation then is predicated upon this creation theory. If this is true, then how could we as women differ so greatly from men?

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.’ (Genesis 2:20b-23).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 81.

Therefore, when we consider “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Genesis 1:27-29). Based on Murrow’s and the scientists theory it would stand to reason that biologically women and men differ. This would then justify the scriptural statement in Genesis 1 as opposed to Genesis 2. I believe this is the first fallacy that came out of the pulpit and this untruth has established a church of misconceptions. There are so many misconceptions in the church that scripture is constantly undergoing scrutiny. I am reminded of the “Great Commission;” yet most of us have been derelict in our duty. I strongly feel that the gospel has been manipulated to keep control and power over everyone, even those who sought to have control. In other words, the monster that was created to frighten and control others has become so large that it has frightened the builders. It is now the Id and the Id is out of control. How do we regroup and tell the truth about the bride of Christ. Better yet do we know the truth? What will become of the disenfranchised church? Who will stand up for righteousness? Who will tell the story of Jesus Christ? Who will tell a dying world that Jesus loves them unconditionally? What has happened to the true believer? Where are they hiding? Are they like the disciples who went into the upper room and hid when Jesus was being crucified? I contend that a lot of people don’t come to church because they are tired of hearing lies; they want to hear the truth. Many come and leave the same way they came in. Why are we as theologians afraid to preach and teach the gospel the way Jesus intended that it be done? Will

righteousness run like a river of waters or will it continue to be boxed into small controlling groups? Perhaps one of the greater sins yet remaining is greed.

There were many advantages for manipulating and controlling scripture, much of which can be traced back to greed. Greed will take out all of the incentives and will manipulate the simple forms of righteousness for self-gain. Greed has no intention toward fairness and will demonstrate no compassion toward others. Greed causes a person to lose the ability to demonstrate a righteous lifestyle.

I rather like the way that Heather Zempel in *Community is Messy* talks about the church in a refreshing way. Perhaps not the way we have envisioned the church to be, but nevertheless the truth about the church—the bride of Christ. Zempel states,

Community is great. Once upon a time, we small group leaders heard a pastor give a stirring message on the theological ecclesiological and practical importance of life in community, and we left with a new-found conviction that we needed to get involved. An announcement was made from the pulpit about the need for new small group leaders, so we decided to put our convictions into practice because we were convinced both spiritually and experientially that small groups are great. We courageously attended leadership training classes and left with a passion to change the world through the greatness of small groups the church promised our small group in print, in words and pictures, and we approached the night of our first meeting with holy anticipation because small groups are great. And then the people showed up.⁴¹

Have we in our quest so wanted the church to succeed that we have overstated the promises of establishing small groups? Yes I believed that small groups were the answer but we have painfully discovered that only the words of scripture with the incarnated gift of the Holy Spirit will keep people small or large. We need the Holy Spirit to succeed. We cannot micro-manage-people no matter how hard we try. I believe that only the

⁴¹ Heather Zempel, *Community is Messy: The Perils and Promise of Small Group Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 23.

embodiment of Jesus Christ makes the difference. We tend to make light of John 3:16, yet it is the fundamental of our livelihood that keeps us from destroying ourselves.

Yes many practices sound good in theory but they will not work on people.

People will rise and surprise you every time. The only things that will cultivate people are the Holy Spirit. As stirring as the sermon maybe it will not having a lasting effect on the people. It is a temporary fix. The Holy Spirit has a lasting effect. As pastors we must learn that we need to lead the people toward relationships with Jesus. Let the people get to know the personhood of Jesus. The Holy Spirit will lead all who come seeking and calling on Jesus. Dietrich Bonhoeffer would question our whole group concepts for he would want to know who we call Jesus. And I quote

The question is what is the present gospel? And who is Christ for us today? May sound shocking at first. Is there a different gospel then and now, there and here? The answer that is indeed only one gospel of the triune God who created the world, who has acted redemptively for the world in Christ, and who is still renewing and transforming all things by the power of The Holy Spirit. Yet it is necessary to reinterpret the language of Christian faith -its stories, doctrines and symbols- for our own time and place if we are faithfully to serve the gospel rather than uncritically to endorse the cultural forms in which it has been mediated to us.⁴²

I agree with Bonhoeffer; there is only one gospel, there is only one triune God.

God is transforming and drawing us closer and closer to the redemptive birth of Jesus.

Nicodemus asked the question of Jesus in the 3 chapter of John “how can a man be born again, can he enter into his mother’s womb a second time? Jesus responded to

Nicodemus by saying marvels, not you, must be born of the water and Spirit of God.

Therefore, we as theologians and teachers of the gospel must rely on the Holy Spirit to

⁴² Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 14.

teach humankind into all truth. And it is only then that the disenfranchised church will be transformed into a Holy church of God—a bride who dresses in righteousness and waits patiently for her Groom's return.

CHAPTER 4

CHURCH GROWTH

I along with my church leaders and the Site Team agreed to work on several issues such as: one of the largest concentration of public housing developments in the entire nation, with an average high school graduation rate of only 27% and a school dropout rate of 39%. And the fact that the church leadership does not understand nor were they willing to address the role that the church has with this problem.

The church which is essentially located in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York which aside from housings it is one of the largest industrial parks in the Brooklyn. The leadership of the church was insensitive to the cultural demographics and the needs of the community. The church leaders by and large had conformed itself to primarily coming, worshipping and returning home.

Their insensitiveness' in this church was so profound that if it had closed prior to our involvement no one from the community would have notice that it is no longer was there. What happens when no one validates your existence? I believe it becomes like the poem that the late Langston Hughes wrote in the mid-20th century:

“Harlem”

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?⁴³

I believe it is like Wayne Jacobsen, Jake Colsen and Dave Coleman description in *So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore*: "I came up here to get away from it all, but I ended up bringing it all with me" ⁴⁴ One of the primary things that we all must live with is that wherever we go we take "me" with me. But have we as theologians been true to our calling? Have we trained church leaders to be responsible to their brothers and sisters? Or have we made them adhere to the vision of simply being armor-bearers for us? That is not to say that they shouldn't be but they should be more than assistants to us. They should be disciples for Christ. Billy Hornsby in *The Attractional Church* states,

How much do you think about these words? Do you realize the significance of 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations' for your church? The importance that you place on these words will determine how much your church members live their lives, which church the under-churched choose, how you as the pastor/leader will 'do' church and ultimately, the eternal rewards you and your church member will receive Jesus⁴⁵

When we observed the unchurched we quickly internalize that we have not adhered to the great commission that Jesus gave to the disciples in the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew. There Jesus' last words

⁴³ Langston Hughes, "Harlem (A Dream Deferred)," *Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* (New York: Random House, 1995), 427.

⁴⁴ Wayne Jacobsen, Jake Colsen and Dave Coleman, *So You Don't Want To Go To Church Anymore* (Los Angeles: Windblown Media, 1984), 65.

⁴⁵ Billy Hornsby, *The Attractional Church* (New York: FaithWords, 2011), 19.

Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age’ (Matthew 28:18-20). ‘The more I live this journey of life in Christ the less motivated I am to keep up with all this... I am not at all comfortable with the growth going on here.’⁴⁶

How difficult is it to take directions? You see most of the unchurched refused to take directions from anyone; they had to do it their way. Even when their way proved to be difficult and they received much hardship because they had done it their way. The late Sammy Davis Jr. sang the song “I did it my way.” Yes much of the unchurched will tell you that if they do it and it comes out wrong, they have no one to blame but themselves. So, they’d rather follow their own advice. So as we examine the graduation rate of only 27% and a school dropout rate of 39%. We must ask ourselves what we are doing as the body of Christ. Are we addressing the problem as we were directed in Matthew?

The King will reply, truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me. They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’(Matthew 25:40-44).

As theologians and teachers of Christ can we truthfully attest to the validity that we have acted as scripture required? John Eckhardt, in *Prayers that Break Curses* offers a scriptural quote: “Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper.

⁴⁶ Jacobsen, Colsen and Coleman, 160.

Your eyes will see strange things and your heart will utter perverse things (Proverbs 23:31-33). These verses show the connection of the spirit of perversion to drunkenness. To pervert means to cause to turn aside.⁴⁷” What will our assertion be when Jesus Christ confronts each of us upon His return. What will we say about our exegesis of the scriptural gospels? The unchurched are unchurched because many of us have failed. I believe our intentions were good but we lack the Holy Spirit; therefore we thought that we could do it like any other business and we failed. When we examine the educational rate we only examine it from a pass or fail but many circumstances impede the unchurched from becoming educated. “The wicked plots against the just... it is almost hard to believe that there are actually people who practice wickedness.”⁴⁸

The unchurched I believe are still waiting for those of us who truly believe that Jesus wants all to be saved. “Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire; being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in

⁴⁷ John Eckhardt, *Prayers that Break Curses* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 1987), 43.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 102.

keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:3-9).

As the scoffers come following their own desires what will the prayer-warrior do we know that they will not win. We know that there is power in prayer. So as the scoffers comes ridiculers we will must put on the whole armour of God ready and waiting for the warfare for it will come but we who are in Christ Jesus are more than conquer. There are prayers that will secure us when we come against demoniac spirits. John Eckhardt in *Prayers that Rout Demons* says “Authority and power must be used. You use them by faith. This is not based on feeling but on faith.”⁴⁹

Why is it that so many believers have turned away from Jesus Christ? Many believers are turned away from church-folks; so many are not interested in going anywhere that church-folks are; nor do they want to hear anything that church-folks have to say. We as theologians have failed God miserably because we have compromised the word of God. We as theologians have lied with no remorse for our behavior. Proverbs speaks of this sin “There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12). Many of us as theologians are dead to the Spirit of God; that is we do as we please. Amos declared, “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5:24). What then can we as theologians dare to say? Yes we have failed God and many of us are failing to succumb to the just duty of our mantle. What does it mean to wear the mantle and know that we are faulty without desiring to ask God to clean us up? As intricate as it may appear could it be possible that the disenfranchised church is really the unchurched? The disenfranchised do not really know

⁴⁹ John Eckhardt, *Prayers that Rout Demons* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2008), 28.

God in the pardoning of their sins. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Yet we seldom utilize our authority over those who believe that we have been endowed with this power, but may walk around feeling defeated. “You have the authority to bind and to loose, to make secure...the work of darkness encompass sin, iniquity, perversion, sickness, disease, infirmity, death, destruction, curses, witchcraft, sorcery, divination, power, lack, strife lust pride, rebellion, fear, torment, and confusion.”⁵⁰ This church and all churches should emulate Jesus “this is who we are the church of Jesus a chosen, holy people who are priests unto God. We practice in-reach when we focus on being transformed into the likeness of Jesus so that our lives declare His praise⁵¹,”

Yes we all are a messy community that requires a savior and the only savior is Jesus Christ, for those persons who have come to full revelation that we did not create ourselves. “When God said, Let there be light He opened the lab of the universe. He distributed galaxies into empty space and flung planets into orbit, hung burning balls of gas to light up the blackness of the sky, and on planet earth, he opened his divine lab.”⁵² As theologians our primary concern should be at all times and places in whatever our ministry is who gets the glory out the activity? The task should never be for self but rather for others. “Think of what we are doing at church as a triangle: The new converts’ fellowship with other believers that fellowship aids in discipleship: effective discipleship equips believers for evangelism, which brings more converts into the fold.”⁵³ We as

⁵⁰ Ibid., 82.

⁵¹ Hornsby, *Attractional Church*, 104.

⁵² Zempel, *Community is Messy*, 49.

⁵³ Hornsby, 82.

theologians should always strive for opportunities to give God glory always. Yes, when God opened up the universe and distributed the light did not illuminate into all dark places, for many of us are still groping in the darkness. It is as Isaiah stated,

Sin begins in the disposition (Theodoret of Cyr). The sin with all parts of the body, through hands feet, tongue. But it is the life inside their minds that sins before all these once it has fallen into imprudence, so that it cannot recognize the peace that it is at hand...the light that reveals our dirt (Ephrem the Syrian). At times even we, when we were in error in pride of our mind as if our feet were struck in mud, did not perceive our error of the divine gospel each day we would grope around in the dark like blind people because our inner mind did not possess that which is necessary for discernment.⁵⁴

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1 invited his followers to copy what he did as he followed Christ. Unless you have a relationship with Jesus Christ you would find Paul's statement full of flaws. But if you are with Jesus and understand that you are saved by grace and there isn't anything that you have done to earn it, then, and only then, will you appreciate where Paul was coming from. You see "Paul knew something that I am only just now beginning to recognize we all need a role model, a picture of Christ that makes the heart, mind and ways of Christ visible and tangible to step into a role of leadership is essentially to state: Follow me as I follow Christ. We may never issue that challenge verbally, but that's the inherent call of leadership"⁵⁵ We, as theologians, invite the disciples of Christ to follow us. If we are doing what others are doing and never confess that we have a relationship with Jesus Christ, then we create disenfranchised and unchurched people who believe but do not desire a relationship with God—the blame must fall on us. What will we do or say when it comes to our soul, how will we ensure

⁵⁴ Mark W. Elliot, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture Old Testament Isaiah 40-66* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 221.

⁵⁵ Zempel, 67.

that we are exemplifying righteous lives? I believe that the apostle Paul attempted to address this situation in Romans when he stated,

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father; we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:1-4).

We have been called out from among the unrighteous to live righteous lives. How long will we make judgment calls on God's people when we too, are continuing in sin? We all hold this truth that the gap between the haves and the have-nots is growing disproportionately larger and larger; coupled with the drop-out rate in Brownsville one doesn't need to do any further study because we know the answers. The question is who are willing to roll-up their sleeves and get into the mud and pull people out? Who will go? This was the question in chapter 6 of Isaiah and is still relevant today: "who will go and who shall I send?" It was Isaiah who declared after his encounter with God "I will go." As theologians have we dared to make this affirmation "here am I, send me"? Church growth requires that we go. Church growth requires that we develop a relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We must without a doubt know the function of each in its Trinitarian essence.

Like Zempel we must find the place where our message will impact the disenfranchised and the unchurched because they may never enter the building but you can catch them where they are. "I'm learning that there's a critical connection between my platform-the place where my message is communicated-and my porch.⁵⁶" Zempel's

⁵⁶ Ibid., 183.

message greatest impact was/is on her front porch; my greatest impact is outside of the building dispensing clothes, furniture, books, tracts, etc. I believe all who are followers of Jesus must find a place where we can do the work of the one who has sent us. We must go even if we go kicking and screaming; yet, we must go. Before we can share we must be well-endowed with the word of God; we must experience God's handiwork for ourselves. In others, we must know and believe what we say ourselves. I learned that one cannot persuade anyone of something that one does not believe or know for oneself. I know that God's promises are yea and amen, for me. The one thing that I will encourage you to do is to try God for yourself. Geoff Surratt in *Ten Stupid Things That Keep Churches from Growing* states, "Your community needs your church. There are people in your neighborhood who will never respond to the tug of Jesus on their hearts if your congregation did not exist."⁵⁷

We at Brownsville have endeavored to develop an educational literacy awareness campaign to raise the awareness of the congregation and community to the educational needs of the Howard Housing Community. We are opened to the community twice weekly to enhance the GED program. The community has been slow in participating but they are coming. "...Everyone gets a free pass, no one is disciplined, and no one is removed from church; it depends on your viewpoint."⁵⁸ Let us always remember that God so loved the world that He went to Calvary for us all when we acknowledge this truth we will become better citizens for the heavenly-kingdom. Dr. James H. Cone in *God of the Oppressed* contends that

⁵⁷ Geoff Surratt, *Ten Stupid Things that Keep Churches from Growing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 145.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 159.

However, we must not forget that what is usually called ‘tradition’ represents the Church’s theological justification of its existence on the basis of its support of the state in the oppression of the poor. What are we to make of a tradition that investigated the meaning of Jesus’ relation to God and the divine and human natures in his person, but failed to relate these Christological issues to the liberation of slave and poor in society? We must not only ask about the social context of the tradition that made it possible for the Church to treat Christ’s relation to the slave as peripheral to its proclamation of the gospel, but we must also press the question to liberation of slave, did the Church lose the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ?⁵⁹

Based on Dr. Cone’s statement and his belief he would attribute the disorder that the church is facing to tradition—traditions neglected and abused. Traditions that represent only a few and all others be damned. The lack of the Holy Spirit being present in the mist of humankind and being left to create perfect worlds where the poor and the slave should be willing to catch the crumbs as they fall from the table. Reminds me of Paul’s Letter to the Romans “shall we continue in sin God forbid.” If we really believe that we are created in the image of god then how can we do the things that we do to each other. For example, who thought of building houses that would house three thousand or more persons? Our quest is to find the relationship between Jesus and God when in fact we cannot handle the business at hand with what we have. Walter Brueggemann in *The Prophetic Imagination* would say,

The radical break of Moses and Israel from imperial reality is a two-dimensional break from both the religion of static triumphalism and the politics of oppression and exploitation. Moses dismantled the religion of static triumphalism by exposing the gods and showing that in fact they had no power and were not gods. Thus, the mythical legitimacy of pharaoh’s social world is destroyed, for it is shown that such a regime appeal to sanctions that in fact do not exist.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 104.

⁶⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001),

What has happened and continues to take place in this country is exploitation in its highest form; and this country seems in totally oblivious to the fact that politics lead the way. Even in the church, politics and exploitation are running rampant with the haves and the have-nots. Dr. Cone holds, “Christ’s salvation is liberation; there is no liberation without Christ. Both meanings are inherent in the statement that Jesus Christ is the ground of human liberation...Fellowship with God is the beginning and the end of human liberation.”⁶¹

Historically there have always been marginalized people with no voice and these people have had to rely on society to deal with them justly. Society has never been able to do so for her sins runs deep. Society’s sins, coupled with her greed, make her incapable of being fair in her walk. To be liberated, it is incumbent that one has a relationship with Jesus, for He alone will free one from oneself.

John Perkins tells his own story in *Let Justice Roll Down* states “I was convinced the black church, since that was the only one I knew anything about—was just one more kind of exploitation. I had seen southern brutality, and the church had kept silent about it. I was convinced that the problems of people were political problems.”⁶²

Most of our problems are political and the other problem is greed. Even Jesus addressed the greed during His tenure of ministry. Dr. Obery M. Hendricks, Jr. in his personal statements regarding the church and his difficulty in preaching the gospel states in his book *The Politics of Jesus*

Not everyone shares the Christian belief in Jesus as the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the promised Messiah. Some do not even recognize

⁶¹ Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 130.

⁶² John Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down* (Ventura CA: Regal Books, 1975), 65.

him as a prophet. No matter what one believes, however, one fact is undeniable: Jesus was a leader. He was so great a leader that two thousand years after his death at any given moment that are untold numbers of believers willing to suffer ostracism, imprisonment, torture, even death for his namesake. Jesus was not only a leader, he was a strategic leader.⁶³

Therefore when we speak of church growth in a community such as Brownsville we must first accept the fact that it was built by design. That design was to keep a people locked into a toxic community. Keep them voiceless and discourage them from dreaming. To dream would be a danger to self and others around them. Apathy is fine as long as it does not come near the more affluent community. Everyone deserves a God who liberates. Stormie Omartian in *What Happens When I talk to God?* states

I may be just a child, but my prayers have power because I am valuable to God. Even though children are small, their prayers are big in God's eyes. My prayers are so important to me that when I pray, He always comes closer to me like being close to God. That's why I talk to Him every day. I say, thank you, God that you are close to me right now and you love to hear me pray.⁶⁴

Everyone needs liberation and only God can and will liberate. In the Asian culture God is expressed in similar ways. For example, Jung Young Lee in *The Trinity in Asian Perspective* explains that

It was a long time ago that my daughter brought home a picture she had drawn in her Sunday School class. As I was looking at the flat-faced person with big eyes, I asked, 'who is this mean-looking guy?' She was very upset with my unfriendly remarks and said 'this is God' don't you see she then pointed her finger at the small printed letter that said God is love. I thought that she was too naïve or too young to know who God was. Now I see myself as being as naïve as she was. What she drew in Sunday school was as good as what I have attempted in this book.⁶⁵

⁶³ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 99.

⁶⁴ Stormie Omartian, *What Happens When I Talk to God? The Power of Prayer for Boy and Girl* (Eugene OR: Harvest House, 2007), 32.

⁶⁵ Jung Young Lee, *The Trinity In Asian Perspective* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976), 212.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE PLAN

The Brownsville AME Zion Church of the Brownsville section of Brooklyn endeavored to change the demographics of this community. We were mystified by all of the issues that this community faced daily just to survive.

Goal 1:

To raise awareness among church leaders and congregants in regards to the Howard Housing community issues of illiteracy and its need to become a community of empowerment. In an attempt to address the goals and strategies systematically the first item on the agenda was prayer. We know that prayer changes thing.

Strategies:

1. Have Site Team and congregation walk-through the community. This walk was used to ascertain one of the ways to enhance the involvement of the community and bridge a cooperative relationship between church leaders and community. The Site Team, “Jews for Jesus,” and the congregation met on Saturday morning for the walk-through. It has been said many times before that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Needless to say after the walk everyone was overcome by the welcome that they received from the Howard community. The Howard community whenever they see the doors of the sanctuary open they will come across the street to visit. Many of the residents from the housing community visit the church and are now more transparent in sharing their personal concerns. Also few persons from housing are now participants in the worship

services. Some have shared their testimonies with me regard their personal lives. E.g. one person shared, “I have been shot sixteen times and left for dead, stayed in the hospital for three weeks but I am here today to tell my children not to get involved with drugs. Yes I use to go to the church down the street and when I stopped going not one person came to see me or to see why I had not been coming. Yes, I believe in God but I don’t believe that people really care about other people.”

“What if God was one of us?” How would the Creator react to the community? Jesus would be applauded by the way the community has been placed on top of each other with very breathing space. There is no regard for the safety or well-being of one another. When humans are disrespected and made to live as non-humans their behavior is then unpredictable and subjected to violent reactions. How can we become more Christ like can we demonstrate love toward others in more meaningful ways? What can we then say to emulate Jesus?

Arthur Bennett in *The valley of Vision* contends “May I never fail to come to the knowledge of the truth, never rest in a system of doctrine, however scriptural, that does not bring or teach further salvation, or teach me to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; or help me to live soberly, righteously, godly; never rely on my own convictions and resolutions.”⁶⁶ We as the body of Christ should be willing to deny ourselves for the work of the kingdom. We should always remember John 3:16 because it was the love of Jesus for us that sent Him to Calvary and kept Him on the cross.

2. How do we as theologians develop ourselves and others to become better disciples/leaders? Will we open ourselves to the transformation of the word of God? I

⁶⁶ Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 64.

gave a series of sermons based on verses from Job and John. The first is from Job 1: 1-7. God speaks to Satan about Job in “Job’s perfect walk.” God asked Satan if he had considered His servant Job? I am reminded of Psalm 30:5 when David declared “weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning.” H. Beecher Hicks, Jr. states it this way,

And I want to believe that, I genuinely want to believe that. I believe your presence today is indicative of your desire to believe that tears are temporary and that joy is the only permanent reality. I genuinely want to be personally persuaded that ‘the flowers of character are watered by the tears of tribulation.’ But I have a question. A serious question. If weeping endures for a night, I want to know, ‘How long is the night?’⁶⁷

How long is the night? For some it appears as though it is a lifetime of woes. Like Job as soon as one thing happens it appears trouble is always lurking over the horizon. No one has to look for trouble, trouble comes without warning. If trouble was like rain or snow one would know how to take cover. But trouble comes unannounced and without knowing what to do it just comes. Scripture says that man born of woman is full of trouble, yes it of trouble, and trouble goes straight to the heart of the matter. For when it comes it takes control and dominates the total situation.

“If It Isn’t One Thing It’s Another,” on Job 1:8-12. You see before Job could adjust to one misfortune, there was another. Patricia O’Connell Killen and John De Beer in *The Art of Theological Reflection* state, “Sooner or later life confronts all of us with situations that raise questions like these questions about the meaning, purpose, and value of our life. Life experience invites us to reflect.”⁶⁸

⁶⁷ H. Beecher Hicks, Jr., *Preaching Through A Storm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 24.

⁶⁸ Patricia O’Connell Killen and John De Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (Spring Valley, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1994), 1.

“It’s A Set Up For A Faith Walk,” Job 1: 13-22. Yes everything happens so that we may see ourselves. In order to grow we must see ourselves in our reckless state.

Killen and De Beer note that

A very lucky man describes a moment of relation that came after he had almost burned himself to death while freebasing cocaine. While recovering himself in the hospital he was telling a friend how this incident had brought him to his senses how he now saw the error of his ways, how cocaine had ruined his life. His friend listened with a growing sense of unease to all of the learning that were flowing from the man’s mouth.⁶⁹

Yes it appears that we only learn when we go through something personally. Like Job’s friends they could not understand the trouble that Job faced. They had no idea what, or why, Job was confronted with so much hardship. Job learned that he was not without flaws in his thoughts. As theologians how do we address our own imperfections? Killen and De Beer believe that “Ministers have a choice. They can ignore or embrace theological reflection as a resource for their own development and for the growth in faith of those with whom they work. Theological reflection offers a powerful strategy for forming religiously mature, adult Christians.”⁷⁰

“God Always Has One,” Job 2:1-10; “The Struggle Goes On and On,” Job 2:11-13; and John 15:15 “He Called Me Friend.” Sermons are now more power-packed, e.g. the church has utilized Banners, Streamers, program Bulletins all to evoke the Holy Spirit into the sanctuary. Fellowship in the church now appears more meaningful than before, now that the significance of worship is understood that God wants all of us. It is now a tremendous success as a result of us understanding and demonstrating compassion toward each other. In *Church Staff Handbook* Harold J. Westing states, “Every team needs a

⁶⁹ Ibid., 43.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 121.

leader. We have established that God's plan is for the church to function as a team for the church staff to function as a microcosm of that body."⁷¹

God seeks to have matured Christians working together in harmony. Spiritually exhorting each other with spiritual psalms, coming to worship as a unit, a body understanding spiritual gifts; church growth that is utilized as a seed. The seed is the word of God constantly building up the body of Christ through the spreading of the word. The word becomes the substance by which we live, move and have our very being in Christ.

3. Utilize resources such as Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Michael Duduit, *Preaching with Power*, Alan M. Blankstein, *Failure is Not an Option* and Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*. We have invited different voices to come and teach as well as preach to the congregants.

4. Preach a sermon that addresses cultural diversity and illiteracy in our neighbors, the Howard Housing community. Many of the congregants now repeat what they have heard through many of the teaching preaching sessions. To preach a sermon about cultural diversity as well as addressing illiteracy in the neighborhood doesn't mean that they are ignorant but rather one must preach on their level of comprehension. H. Beecher Hicks, Jr. *Preaching Through A Storm* declares, "It has come to me by reasonably reliable authority that the mark of culture and stamp of breeding is to be measured by the use of what society calls etiquette. We are characterized as polite or impolite, rude or refined, by our ability or inability to make proper use of etiquette."⁷² I

⁷¹ Harold J. Westing, *Church Staff Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1997), 29.

⁷² Hicks, *Preaching Through A Storm*, 104.

agree with Hicks when one preaches one should know one's audience. One should always make sure that one does not present oneself as rude but rather be polite at all times. No matter how illiterate a person may be perceived to be they will still know when you are condescending. Hicks goes on to preach about "when glory comes." He says,

There are certain words in the arena of religious language which are by their nature somewhat vague, perhaps obtuse and oblique, but certainly difficult in terms of precision in definition. The great doctrinal themes of the church-sin and salvation, righteousness and redemption, justification and purification-all are words (or, if you will, concepts and ideas) which even though they fall freely from our lips, we spend the whole of our spiritual journey pursuing and never come to a full understanding of the word within the word.⁷³

Wow! What a word. Unless we preach to a dying world the importance of salvation we have done to them as well as ourselves a dishonor to the kingdom of God. No matter how often we preach or teach the salvation story we cannot fully understand the miraculous way that the Holy Spirit enters and makes it all worth-while.

Every preacher tries to tell the story of the gospel in a different and unique way. We could name a few great preachers but unless they pointed to the way of the cross it was all for naught. Preaching is not to be taken lightly but each time one preaches one should preach as though it is the last time that one will be able to tell the story of salvation. Ronald J. Allen in *Contemporary Biblical Interpretation for Preaching* declares that "Among main-line laity and clergy, biblical illiteracy is no longer unusual. By biblical illiteracy I mean a lack of familiarity with the content of the scriptures as well

⁷³ Ibid., 170.

as uncertainty about how to interpret them. The problem is of both method and meaning.”⁷⁴

As a theologian I believe that God does the interpreting of the word by the use of the Holy Spirit. God speaks to each one and anoints the spirit of humankind; the inspiration of the Holy Spirit prepares each of us for the scripture and then the Holy Spirit becomes alive as God works on us collectively and individually. Gerhard Lohfink’s *Jesus and Community* states, “At the time Harnack was in no sense isolated with the individualistic picture of church and salvation. He is rather representative of a broad tendency of liberal theology at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth. The idea that the reign of God could come only to each individual that it is something profoundly internal and that the church therefore had to be a primary spiritual community was widespread in Protestant theology at that time.”⁷⁵ Today we as theologians still hold these beliefs to be true. Yes! God the creator of all and everything thing can and does transcend into a world where individuals may never have encountered the Holy Spirit. This is one of the reasons why the five-fold- ministry (preachers, teachers, apostles, pastors, and evangelist) is important—the story of Jesus Christ must be told.

5. Create Inspirational Banners to enhance the presence of the Holy Spirit during worship services as well as engage non-readers to sight-reading, e.g. banners displaying scripture such as: 1 Chronicles 16:9, “Sing to him, sing praise to him.” Frank A. Thomas in *They Like To Never Quit Praisin’ God* states, “It is critical to begin with shift to a

⁷⁴ Ronald J. Allen, *Contemporary Biblical Interpretation for Preaching* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1984), 15.

⁷⁵ Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 3.

system perspective because a systems perspective allows us to distinguish the preparation of the emotional context from the preparation of content. Most homiletic method focuses on the preparation of content with little attention to emotional process, but intentional preparation of the emotional context is primary to the celebrative sermon.”⁷⁶ The banners, like the sermons, must have a climatic ending. The banners too, must speak to the heart of humankind. It must awaken the spiritual aspects of humankind. By the time the person hears the preached word their soul is full of praise for the God of the universe. Every sermon should stir-up the unholy spirit within and awaken the Holy Spirit and let it reign.

“Tell of all his wonderful acts.” Judges 5:3, “Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers! I, even I, will sing to[a] the Lord; I will praise the Lord, the God of Israel, in song.” Psalm 100 “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

6. Engage in activities that will include Howard Housing: Since the walk-through at Howard Housing a few participants are now enrolled in the GED Program, in order to meet their needs the program has moved to Saturday. On-going voter’s registration continues. Many of those who registered earlier now are bringing their families and friends to register. Some are eager to share their political views.

⁷⁶ Frank A. Thomas, *They Like To Never Quit Praisin’ God* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1997), 51.

Evaluation:

At the end of the walk-through, site team members will prepare a written document of their observations. They will then report to the congregation on their findings. The Site Team did not give a written report but they did share with the congregation their findings: (1) Now that the Howard Housing community knows that you are here and that you care about them they have promised to visit with you in worshipping, fellowship with you more frequently; (2) many of them said they did not know that this building was a church; (3) now that they see the awning with the logo they will come; (4) they inquired about the clothing and food that we often give to the community; (5) we informed them that we will do evangelizing once a month and give out tracts; and (6) they said that they too give the tracts that we give them to others. The Site Team appeared enthusiastic as they gave their report. They also offered other approaches to church growth.

We all agreed that we too, can become a beacon of light and really demonstrate that we are the salt of the earth.

Reflection of sermons and Bible study will be on-going for clarity from the congregation toward equipping them for the needs of Howard Housing. The Brownsville church community appears to be more available than before the walkthrough. It has been said when discussing the theology of the late Martin Luther King “he was no armchair theologian. He was a theologian of action, an engaged theologian, actively seeking to transform the structures of oppression. His thinking emerged from his efforts to establish

a just society.”⁷⁷ I believe that King was a living Epistle it does not mean that he did not have flaws it just means that he worked through or in spite of his flaws.

Goal 2

Recruit and train church leaders to act as tutors to selected participants of Howard Housing with a full awareness of its complex illiteracy problems. Yes like King we too, must press our way toward the mark of excellent. King would say “help me to see the growth comes through struggle...A just community is an integrated community”⁷⁸

Strategies:

Recruit and train tutors: It is always good to expose the congregational leaders to others churches who are working toward kingdom building it helps to strengthen the leaders and too, it makes them more aware of the atmosphere that they must work in to accomplish the much needed goals. David S. Young in *Servant Leadership Church Renewal* states, “It is crucial that all leaders who want to drink of this water and lead others to it be attuned to the voice of the Shepherd of us all...Leaders need to be refreshed at the same springs where everyone else drinks. Each leader emerges refreshed, with unique ministries to offer the church.”⁷⁹

I believe that Young is referring to mature leaders in Christ. Coming and gathering together to serve ultimately for the cause of winning souls for Christ. Mature leaders must place others above themselves. This doesn’t mean that one should by any means neglect oneself but that finally esteeming others and realizing that this is what

⁷⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Theology of Martin Luther King Jr* (New York: Warner, 1998), 53.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 56.

⁷⁹ David S. Young, *Servant Leadership Church Renewal, Shepherds by the Living Springs* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999), 19.

Christ wants us to do. “Where can one find good models for leadership in modern society...Emerging through all? These fallen traditions, however, is the model of servant, who comes to play a key leadership role. For example, the Jeremiah saw himself as a lad, literally meaning a servant. Priests were supposed to help the people see they had a mission.”⁸⁰

This is not to say that leadership is easy for leadership comes with many pitfalls even sometimes it can become quite dangerous. For example, recently there was an incident in one of the local churches in Atlanta where a congregant became angry with the pastor due to some advice the pastor had given the congregant’s wife. The congregant came to church with a gun and shot and killed the pastor. We cannot take leadership roles lightly. We must stay prayed-up and spiritually ready for the return of Jesus Christ coming for His bride. As church leaders we need to ascertain whether the church is capable of growth, and if so what kind of church do we have or want. Will our emphasis be on music, programs, and services? We are currently assessing what services the church offered. We are currently undergoing and assessing brokenness. We are examining short-term and long-term goals; goals that are obtainable. We will review the goals every quarter. We as church leaders will under-go study on humility and compassion. We believe and stress that any church will grow if the entire body works together, we realize that this is an opportunity to pray more freely. It is essential that we as church leader understand that we must be suitable coming together and working together. Church leaders should be connected together to church leaders. Pressing toward the mark of the high calling this is a mature leader. God wants to stretch each one of us

⁸⁰ Ibid., 27.

beyond what we can image. Howard Thurman in *Jesus and the Disinherited* states “You must abandon your fear of each other and fear only God.”⁸¹ It appears that Church leaders house more fear than the secular world; I believe that it is a trick of the enemy.

Plan a retreat to engage the Site Team and congregation in participation and sensitivity toward the community

Evaluation:

Have a summit with church leaders regarding their insight into the illiteracy that appears to be gripping the community in negative ways, e.g., the lack or the inability to complete a given task such as high school. On-going observation will be utilized to better understand the systemic problems in Howard Housing which causes her to focus on the negative in the community rather than the positive.

The question one must address is (1) why education is not an important component in the Howard Housing? (2) When did crime began to escalate? (3) Where was the community when education started to decrease and crime started to increase? (4) How did the community change and no one notice that it was determinate? (5) What do leaders of the community plan to do to implement positive results?

Goal 3:

Develop criteria for selecting participants by using a questionnaire, for example, utilize the Test for Adult Basic Examination (TABE) Pre-Test/Post-Test in determining/assessing their educational ability.

- Strategy 1: Develop an educational campaign along with a curriculum specific to leadership and the Howard Housing.
- Strategy 2: Determine the criteria for selection of GED applicants

⁸¹ Thurman, 35.

- Strategy 3: Recruit Applicants who will take part in the GED survey and enroll in the program

Evaluation:

- Request from the congregation and the Site Team on-going feedback regarding the cultural diversity in the community and their willingness to engage in healthy ways to enhance the literacy campaign awareness programs.

Goal 4:

Develop a Literacy Program emphasizing the GED

- Strategy 1: Provide the time and space for instructional information re: GED for the enrollees
- Strategy 2: Create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning, including free access to the internet, allow applicants to explore their surroundings
- Strategy 3: Establish tutor schedules and monitor progress

Evaluation:

- • Prepare a written document of the number of students who successfully complete the program and drop out of the program
- • Assign a Site Team member to do interviews of the church's leaders pre- and post-attitude toward Howard Housing
- • Store information on-line so that it can be downloaded for analysis.
- • Assess Site Team's attitudes toward Howard.
- • Provide written assessment of the church's views both pre and post and develop role-playing based upon their views
- • Perform verbal surveys to determine the on-going findings and results.

CHAPTER 6

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

The Process

The members of the Site Team dedicated considerable time and vigor in supporting me in the process of competency assessment. The Site Team members involved were Dr. Sally A. Thompson (Hempstead, N.Y.), Belinda Fernandez (West Hempstead, N.Y.), Renee Love (Decatur, Ga.), Dr. Sheila Lyle (Stockbridge Ga.), Doreathea Hamilton (Brooklyn, N.Y.), Feola Murray (Bronx, N.Y.), Terrance Harris (Bronx, N.Y.), Lamont & Dr. Ruthie Cannon (Durham, N.Y.), and Deloris Hampton, (Brooklyn, N.Y.).

The Site Team and I convened and I informed them of the assessment process. Renee Love agreed to collect and summarize the assessments. The Site Team conference met during the second week of July with my assistance and responded to their responsibility. Each then shared with me their areas relating to my growth in this project. A summary of the Site Team's and my assessment of ministerial competencies follow.

Theologian

Rev. Lyle comprehends the principles and authority of the church. She proclaims the doctrine of faith and is able to express, justify, and interpret the word of God. She has a belief in the inerrancy of the scriptures and believes that man's character is only prone in the direction of sin, but is not in servitude to it. Candidate feels the need to continue her focus on a theological foundation that emphasizes diversity and evangelism.

Preacher

Reverend Lyle is strong in her spiritual disciplines. She demonstrates an ability to exalt God through the teaching of His word, the promotion of evangelism, and the encouragement of others. She is a visionary and is proficient in communicating with clarity the word of God. Her sermons exhibit her efficacy in its preparation and presentation. Her teachings provide biblical instruction that is applicable to laity. Candidate desires to develop leaders within the congregation that will effectively impart the word of God to others.

Worship Leader

Reverend Lyle has a heart for worship ministry. She has a strong sense of call to serve God and leads with confidence, communicates with clarity, and is able to work affectively with members to inspire, motivate, and mobilize them to discover and attain their spiritual giftedness. She works tirelessly and is committed to growing the ministry, serving Christ, and meeting the needs of the congregation. Candidate desires to continue to utilize the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Bicentennial Hymnal and other culturally explicit rituals in the church worship.

Change Agent

Rev. Lyle is able to effect change through her excellent abilities to assess situations, and draw from her experiences needed programs, services, and activities for the benefit of the community. Her eagerness and positive approach serves to attract and involve others to the causes. It is through her church activities that Rev. Lyle is able to develop a sense of interest, belonging and ownership for the development of their church, 20 programs and activities. Rev. Lyle is aware of today's social injustices and

understands the needs of individuals and community. Candidate desires to learn more about the various cultures in her community.

Ecumenist

Rev. Lyle's strong religious upbringing, religious educational background, exposure to other faiths, and visit to Israel has led her to have a respect for, and an appreciation of religious differences and similarities. She articulates an understanding of other faiths and cultures. She speaks of her relationship with others interfaith and encourages others to participate in interdenominational projects. Candidate wants to increase her awareness of the practices of other religions within her church community, as well as their social/cultural customs and needs.

Leader

Rev. Lyle is an organizer who recognizes people's talents and engages them in activities that will reinforce their self-confidence. She is supportive and encourages individuals to go beyond their comfort zone. As a leader, she recognizes that some individuals need to be held to the task which she is able to do in a respectful manner. Candidate wants to feel more comfortable when calling individuals to task.

Religious Educator

Rev. Lyle is an infectious leader who sows the seed. She is a meticulous educator and fastidious in her preparation and delivery of focal points. She supervises, involves and trains church leaders with compassion. She has the ability to influence others in the progression of understanding. Candidate wants to continue to develop a collection of intellectual resources that stress academic growth, spiritual development, and inclusiveness in God's kingdom.

Counselor

Rev. Lyle is able to rely on her professional counseling skills when working with individuals who are seeking guidance and support in their personal and religious life. She is able to develop and maintain an excellent counseling relationship that allows for an on-going trusting and confidential atmosphere to exist. She is able to effectively work with individuals because of her excellent verbal skills. Candidate believes that she must always be conscious of feelings as a spiritual leader.

Pastor/Shepherd

Reverend Lyle's organizational skills allow her to implement successful church programs that have served to attract new church members. Her patience and acceptance of people has been vital for the growth and success of her ministerial programs and services. Candidate recognizes that she needs to explore new services for the growth of the church.

Spiritual Leader

Reverend Lyle is dedicated and passionate about the mental, physical, and spiritual welfare of all. She focuses on service to the congregation and surrounding community. She demonstrates values that incorporate service, stewardship, and social responsibility. She is concerned about holiness and cultivates character. Candidate feels the need to continue to study and develop spiritually

Administrator

Reverend Lyle establishes clear procedures for collecting, documenting, and reporting data. She has an ability to effectively allocate financial resources to support programs and activities acquired by the church. She communicates effectively the vision for the church and encourages the collaboration of community and church

relationships.²² Candidate continues to work on improving external programs and the push of leaders to uphold accountability for tasks assigned.

Professional Skills

Reverend Lyle's exceptional counseling skills, excellent communication skills, and the ability to draw people to her has led her to be well-respected and trusted by the people she serves. She is an enthusiastic and positive person who affects change within her ministry. Candidate will develop a realistic time frame when developing and implementing future programs and services for the church and community. This process was very needed and appreciated for the Site Team whose unwavering faith in God enabled them to develop multifaceted views regarding me in ministerial competencies

Strategies:

As Preacher

I will endeavor with the leadership of the Almighty to study literature that will enhance my growth and the church's awareness towards betterment in the community. I will seek-out persons that have been in the community for a long period of time, and gather information as related to church growth. I will utilize sermons, advertisements, films and other media that will address complacency. I will continue to join in the community meetings where the conditions of the community are addressed but I will implement programs that will address the needs of the community.

As Counselor

I will always solicit God's intervention no matter what I endeavor to undertake. God will always be there.

Conclusion: Brownsville community showed significant improvement at the end of the assessment. Many of the church leaders were more readily available to the Howard

Housing and demonstrated a willingness to become involved with the various ministries. For example, they have made themselves available to the needs of the community in preparing prayer-groups, witnessing, sharing and food. The outreach ministry has grown in particular to the “Angel Tree” which is a prisons ministry. These children’s parents are incarcerated and the children are living with a single parent and or grandparents. They look forward to coming and getting involved with the church. Many promises are made by the parents during the Christmas season but very few are kept. We also continue to reach out to first and second time visitors. The church enrollment has grown since my inception. The Sunday Bible class via-telephone has grown and many participants from other states are now regular participants. This is also true of the via-telephone which is held every Monday night for prayer for one hour both have the study and the pray been very effective.

Spiritually the church has grown more than numerically. When I started on this journey my undertaking was to study why the church was not growing in numbers. However, I realize that God had me involved with this study for a totally different reason and that reason was spiritual. I have discovered that everything is either spiritual or secular there is no in-between. One the church grows spiritually then it will grow numerically.

CHAPTER 7

TRANSFORMATION

The very first thing that I noticed upon my arrival at Brownsville was the way the congregation appeared pleased with everything. They did not want change to take place. There were no chorus and they let me know that they were used to singing without a chorus. My first challenge was cut out for me; I let them know that biblically we needed a chorus. The congregation agreed verbally but their hearts were far removed from having a choir.

Newcomers arrived with voices like angels and we organized a choir. Many of the congregation decided to join the choir and everything appeared fine. Needless to say in my absence havoc arose, and when I returned consequently, there was no choir. Not only did the newcomers leave the choir, they left the church. I took all of this to the Lord and questioned the Lord as to why and whether they were correct in their choice not to have a choir. I then inquired from the congregation who would like to sing a solo before I mounted the pulpit to give the sermon. No one came forward.

God sent a new group; they too, like to sing so we formed another choir. Immediately the congregation wanted to become a part of the choir. Again I agreed to their joining choir. The congregation appeared quite interested in singing; they even opted to sing solos.

I was not aware of their strategy when they took on leadership positions on the choir; and I was not aware when they began canceling rehearsals. Many choir members

would come out for rehearsals not knowing that the choir rehearsal had been canceled. I then requested notification of all cancellations but by this time the choir members had become despondent and lost interested in singing.

I knew that this was spiritual warfare going on between me and many of the congregants and I began to pray and pray to God to give me staying power and to withstand the evil at hand. God gave me hope. In the midst of the problem some of the congregants who were undermining the Spirit of God relocated; others died. God rescued me, in the midst of it all. I began to speak for change and I began to pray for a change. God does answer prayer. One Sunday morning as I was beginning to mount the pulpit a new family came into the sanctuary and they praised the Lord. And God moved, the newcomers had musical talents, and they began to sing praises unto the Lord.

They joined the church and formed a choir again, but the battle did not stop. One of the youth that sang on the choir became ill and the doctors began to diagnose her condition. This battle I understood was not mine but it belonged to God. I counseled with God on this matter and found out as many other sojourners discovered on this walk, the battle is not mine but it is the Lord. Edward Mote wrote many songs and tells of the time his wife was ill in 1834. He was inspired after praying and penned this hymn “My Hope is Built on Nothing less than Jesus’ Blood and His Righteousness I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus’ Name.”

Again I was transformed by the work that I did, initially on the project of Church growth. This project has taught me the meaning of humility. I now have compassion for everyone. Those that do well and those that seek to do well all belong to God. When I started out I wanted to see an increase in church growth numerically. However, it was not

the church that needed the change, it was me. For I was a Moses running and unaware of what I was running from. Now I know that church growth can only come from the Creator. It no longer troubles me when I see churches with great numbers for that is not church growth; rather that is a church where many persons choose to attend. You see I realize that their communities still have the same problems as the others with smaller numbers. The word of God says “That one could put five thousand to flight and two could put ten thousand to flight.” Therefore, the numbers of people filling a sanctuary are insufficient to God

Where do you go when there is no place to go? Who do you turn to when there is no one to turn to? I have learned painfully that I can turn to Jesus and He will always restore peace within. I am reminded of John M. Perkins *Restoring At-Risk Communities* who states,

Christian community development, as a ministry, requires that we live a life of submission, accepting the costs as well as the rewards. One thing have I learned after all of these years, one thing which I would admonish all other ministers and ministry partners to do before embarking on that long and often difficult journey, is to count the cost—that is, be prepared for what lies ahead for you and your family. Community ministry is no easy road, and even though we make our commitment to that road individually, our loved ones must often travel it with us. Christ set a tough standard for us; ‘anyone who want to be my follower must love me far more than he does his own father, mother, wife, children, brother, or sister—yes, more than his own life otherwise he cannot be my disciple.’⁸²

After trying several projects and watching each one meet with undue circumstances I now seek the Lord before wading out into the deep. It made a difference in the congregation and in the way I had previously been blocked by the adversary. I have

⁸² Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 196-7.

adopted one of President Theodore Roosevelt's foreign policy slogans, "Speak softly and carry a big stick." I walk with humility and I take the word of God with me.

I am now clearer in my personal convictions for I know that these trials come to make me stronger. I know that many of the congregants were not interested in the growth of the church; they thought that it was really alright the way it was. However, through preaching serial sermons and teaching the word of God many have come to realize that it is about kingdom building. Even though they were content with the way things had been, they now realize that they have been called to a higher calling.

I realized that the change was not needed so much in them but rather in me. I went into projects not really understanding people and the way they think, regarding church and its functions. The eye-opener for me was the fact that people come to the church that they feel most comfortable with. And it is up to the pastor or the exhorter to give them an insight into what God is calling them to do. They will come and if they are not comfortable with the setting, the music or the singing they will not return. I now know it is okay if they don't return. I tell them what the Lord has instructed them to be told through the word.

I now can envision what Jesus meant when He said in Matthew 25:29-44 "for as much as you have done to the least of these you have done to me." Wonderful words of wisdom. Just to know that Jesus looks at me with compassion is beyond my comprehension.

In the beginning I took these trials personally but as time went on I realized that people are people wherever you go. People will do the same things they blame others for but God is God and he will never forsake one. I learned that we as the children of the

Creator only have to trust Him and Him alone. Yes! I learned and kneel beside the greatest artist so as Hugh Stowell who knew God for himself for he penned one of the greatest hymn of his time “From Every Stormy Wind that Blows From every swelling tide of woe There is a Calm, sure retreat Tis Found beneath the Mercy seat.”

You see there are not many like Ruth who will declare as she did to Naomi “your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God and where you go I will go.” This is not always true today. However there are a few new congregants who declare that where I go they too will go. I thank God for their trust in me. I state as the Apostle Paul said, “Follow me as I follow Christ.” (1Corinthians 11:1).

Although I am redeemed from self for I am now in a closer relationship with God. I am able to internalize that God can do whatever God wants to do. Whenever the Creator decides to will or do it is now well with my soul.

I am free, free from self, free from things that so easily entangled me before. Those obstacles no longer capture my attention. Thank God I am free. Free from people and their opinions. Free from church folks who think that they have the only approach to heaven. Yes I am free from ecclesiastical theories regarding what is correct and what isn't. Free from the proper way to exegete biblical scripture. Yes I am free to listen and to hear from God; and to listen to vibrations of the holy and inspired word as it speaks softly to my heart. Free to search for truth and to thank Go when I find it. Free to know that truth goes on and on.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A PROPOSAL

CHURCH GROWTH DEVELOPMENT

By

AMANDA LYLE

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

New York Theological Seminary

2013

Challenge Statement

The Brownsville section of Brooklyn, NY is home to the largest concentration of public housing developments in the entire nation, with an average high school graduation rate of only 27% and a school dropout rate of 39%. The church leadership does not understand its role in addressing this problem. This demonstration project will develop an educational literacy awareness campaign to raise the awareness of the congregation and community to the educational needs of the Howard Housing Community in Brownsville.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

The Setting

This researcher is a pastor of the historically renowned Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, located in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, N.Y.—home to the largest concentration of public housing developments in the entire nation.¹ Statistics show there is only a 27% high school graduation rate and a high school dropout rate of 39% in the Brownsville community.² These astonishing statistics show that the church leadership in the neighborhood does not understand its role in addressing this problem. If this issue is not addressed, the educational level will continue to decline and the dropout rate will continue to increase. This demonstration project will develop an educational literacy awareness campaign to raise the awareness of the congregation and the community of the educational needs of the Howard Housing Community in Brownsville.

The Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is located in the Ocean Hill Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York. The Church is part of a Connectional Church, headquarters located in Charlotte, North Carolina. There are approximately fifty persons in the congregation. Most of the congregation is related and

¹ <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/home/home.shtml> (accessed November 7, 2012).

² <http://www.city-data.com/neighborhood/Brownsville-Brooklyn-NY.html> (accessed November 7, 2012).

rely upon each other for transportation to and from the sanctuary. The services are held every Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The services are: Sunday school and Worship, Eucharist every 1st Sunday, membership meetings every 2nd Sunday. Trustee and Stewards meetings are held once a month. Bible study twice a week, Fridays at the sanctuary, and Sundays via telephone from the members' home. There are also participants who engage in Bible study via telephone from other states. Outreach Bible Study is by request. Both studies are held for one hour. Adoption of prison ministry is held for children whose parents are incarcerated. We have instituted prayer the first Friday of every month at the sanctuary and via telephone every Monday for the Brownsville parishioners and those from other denominations. Many of the members have engaged in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Leadership Training Institute which is held annually. All worship services are charismatic in that they are lively as opposed to the traditional Methodist congregational service. The youth are engaged in liturgical dance and there is a Mass and a male choir. There has been better participation in praise and worship services as a result.

Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church provides a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) Educational Literacy Awareness Program for the community and many persons have received their high school diplomas as a result of this effort. Many of the students are pursuing higher educational goals for use in their long awaited dreams of becoming productive citizens in the community. The church is situated across from the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), and we have become an asset to the community. The church has benefitted greatly by serving the community as an outreach facility; ministering to them is an on-going effort. The church has provided a

clothing-drive and also collects for other community needs such as furniture and appliances. The church is attempting to meet their needs spiritually and physically.

Demographics:

The church community of Brownsville/Ocean-Hill is located in Eastern Brooklyn, New York, a largely residential neighborhood. The total land area is one square mile, and the ZIP code for the neighborhood is 11212. The Brownsville Community is bordered by East New York Avenue to the north (on the Bedford-Stuyvesant border), East 98th Street to the west (East Flatbush) and the freight rail Bay Ridge Branch of the Long Island Rail Road to the south (adjacent to the neighborhood of Canarsie) and to the east (East New York).

The area is patrolled by the 73rd Precinct located at 1470 East New York Avenue. New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) property in the area is patrolled by Police Service Area 2 (P.S.A. 2.) It is part of Brooklyn Community Board 16. In 2010, Brownsville's population was 116,579 and the demographics were 70.8% Non-Hispanic Black or African American, 19.1% Hispanic/Latino primarily of Puerto Rican descent, 2.9% Non-Hispanic White, 1.8% Asian/Pacific Islander and 5.4% described themselves as other. 29.9% of the population were High School graduates and 8.4% had a Bachelor's degree or higher. As of 2008, the median household income was \$15,978. There were a total of 28,298 housing units in Brownsville.³

Brownsville is home to the largest concentration of public housing developments in the entire nation. Within this one-square mile neighborhood, nearly 23 percent of Brownsville's 85,161 residents live in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)

³ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36047.htm> (accessed November 7, 2012).

developments. Comparatively, in all of New York City, NYCHA residents represent only 8.4 percent of the total population. According to 2008 census data, 48.1 percent of residents in Brownsville and nearby Ocean Hill received some type of income support—be it public assistance or supplemental security income. Census data shows that residents in the 11212 zip code for Brownsville have a per capita income nearly half that of the United States average—\$10,666 to \$21,587—and that 38.3 percent of all individuals were living below the poverty line, as opposed to 12.4 percent for the entire nation.⁴

Brownsville is dominated by public housing developments of various types. There is also a significant concentration of semi-detached multi-unit row houses similar to those found in East New York and Soundview surrounding the public housing developments. Many, however, have been torn down and are now either vacant lots or newly constructed subsidized attached multi-unit row houses. There are also a small number of tenements in the area. The neighborhood contains the highest concentration of NYCHA developments in New York City.

The Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is located across from Howard Houses—ten buildings, all thirteen stories tall. Many of the people come out to participate in the educational component and other activities that the church holds, but they are not regular participants of the worship services.

Initially, Brownsville was a Jewish community, politically radical—throughout the 1920s and 1930s, it elected Socialist and American Labor Party candidates to the state assembly. As early as the 1910s, the area had acquired a reputation as a vicious slum and breeding ground for crime. It has been known throughout the years for its criminal gangs

⁴ Ibid.

and in the 1930's and 1940's achieved notoriety as the birthplace of Murder, Inc. It was a predominantly Jewish neighborhood until the 1960s, when its population had become largely black and Brownsville's unemployment rate was 17 percent. Half of all families in the district lived on less than \$5,000 a year.⁵

“In September 1967, a riot occurred following the death of an 11-year-old black male Richard Ross who was killed by a black New York City Police Department (NYPD) Detective John Rattley at the corner of St. Johns Place and Ralph Avenue. He was suspected of mugging a 73-year-old white Jewish man. The riot was additionally fueled by Brooklyn militant Sonny Carson who spread false rumors that a white policeman killed the youth for no reason and was only quelled after Brooklyn North Borough Commander Lloyd Sealy deployed a squad of 150 black police officers to the riot scene to prevent further looting. The officer responsible was later cleared after a grand jury refused to indict him.”⁶

In 1968 Brownsville was the setting of a protracted and highly contentious teachers' strike. The Board of Education had experimented with giving the people of the neighborhood control over the school. The new administration laid off several teachers in violation of union contract rules. The teachers were all white and mostly Jewish, and the resulting strike served to badly divide the whole city. The resulting strike dragged on for half a year, becoming known as one of John Lindsay's “Ten Plagues.”⁷

⁵ Wendell E. Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 33-37.

⁶ <http://ohbcyp.wordpress.com/history/> (accessed November 7, 2012).

⁷ Vincent J. Cannato, *The Ungovernable City* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 302.

CHAPTER 2 PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Challenge Statement

The Brownsville section of Brooklyn, NY is home to the largest concentration of public housing developments in the entire nation, with an average high school graduation rate of only 27% and a school dropout rate of 39%. The church leadership does not understand its role in addressing this problem. This demonstration project will develop an educational literacy awareness campaign to raise the awareness of the congregation and community to the educational needs of the Howard Housing Community in Brownsville

A large part of the problem in the Howard Housing Community is due to the lack of educational aspirations and attainment of the community which lends itself to many ills. Crime is very high and ongoing monitoring by the 73rd precinct as cited earlier has created apathy and disillusionment in the Howard Housing Community.

Howard Thurman, especially in *Jesus and the Disinherited*, expressed how he poured out himself in script. Thurman spoke of fear and how it tended to prevent one from accomplishing the very essentials of life. "You must abandon your fear of each other and fear only God. You must not indulge in any deception and dishonesty, even to save your lives. Your words must be Yea-Nay; anything else is evil. Hatred is destructive to hated and hate alike. Love your enemy that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven."⁸ It is my hope that as a result of these programs and services, leaders will be

⁸Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 35.

inspired to address the needs of the community; that they will become advocates in educational literacy. The church will become a leader in the campaign to enhance educational literacy. The congregation and community understand that the graduation rate will continue to decline and the dropout rate will accelerate if the educational needs in Brownsville are not met.

Scripture tells us in Isaiah 5:13, “My people go into exile for lack of knowledge...” and in Hosea 4:6, “My people perish for lack of knowledge...” It is of the utmost importance that the Church responds to the needs of its community. According to Daniel L. Migliore in *Faith seeking Understanding*, “Christians are called to relate to non-Christians in the confidence that the grace of God made known in Jesus Christ is at work by the power of God’s Spirit even where it is not recognized as present⁹”.

According to statistical data, crime is high in this housing complex but crime and education are linked and related to illiteracy—an indication of educational neglect. Education has been and still is the key to liberation. Education literacy awareness alone will not be sufficient; we still need transformation of the entire person. Therefore, I will seek a holistic approach to this problem. With this in mind, the church leadership will understand its role in addressing this problem. There still remains a great need to preach and teach for transformation. The educational literacy awareness programs will build relationships and instill church leaders with higher-levels of awareness regarding the issues facing the residents of Howard Housing.

Preaching/teaching for transformation, coupled with the educational literacy awareness programs and services, will stir-up the gifts of the church leaders. And through

⁹ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 327.

this effort, hopefully, there will emerge from the trained leaders a sense of urgency in the community which will spark leadership growth. Then the trained church leaders, as well as many of the congregants' views of the church and the community will change from its current negative state.

We will attempt to address the systemic problem of the lack of educational awareness that the community currently faces as well as a lack of community involvement. It is crucial that we in the Brownsville church understand that what may work in another community may not work in this community—for no two communities come to the forefront with the same yearning that the other has. Blankstein, in *Failure Is Not an Option* states notes the wasted time in “waiting for the dream person or program, the many nuances of creating meaningful change defy formulaic approaches, what works in a wealthy Chicago suburb may not work in your urban or Appalachian school.”¹⁰ It is my desire as pastor of this congregation that emerging from this endeavor we will find a wind of spiritual awakening and a profound transformation in both the leadership and in the population.

Preaching and education literacy programs will be augmented to empower leaders in the housing community. I understand that preaching truth will bring liberation but as the late Howard Thurman stated “Mere preaching is not enough. What are words, however sacred and powerful, in the presence of the grim facts of the daily struggle to survive?”¹¹ I anticipate a greater participation within the community as a result from sharing and growing together. It is my hope that leaders will invest in the family of the

¹⁰Alan M Blankstein, *Failure Is Not an Option* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2004), 47.

¹¹Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 35.

Brownsville community. We all must arrive at the ultimate conclusion “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and witness to it” (1 John 1:1-2). It is our duty to aid others who are less fortunate than we. We can only accomplish this effort through diligently seeking ways to become involved with the plight of the less fortunate.

Therefore, implementation of preaching and educational literacy awareness programs will challenge the community biblically, culturally, socially and psychologically. On-going clarity will be utilized to promote interest regarding the Site Team. It is my anticipation that by February 2013 we will all move toward an amenable solution in addressing the community needs as it relates to this project. The resources for this project will for the most part come from me and my family. Other resources will be requested if determined that I need to do so. Having sponsored my educational needs thus far I will not solicit monetary resource from anyone. However, should any one including any of my Site Team partners feel the desire to contribute it will be greatly appreciated.

CHAPTER 3 PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1:

To raise awareness among church leaders and congregants in regards to the Howard Housing community issues of illiteracy and its need to become a community of empowerment.

Strategies:

1. Have Site Team and congregation walk-through the community. This walk will be one of the ways to enhance the involvement of the community and bridge a cooperative relationship between church leaders and community.
2. What if God was one of us? How would the Creator react to the community? Development of Disciples/leaders through transformation of the word of God for example: series of sermons such as; Job 1:1-7 “If It Isn’t One Thing It’s Another,” Job 1:8-12 “It’s A Set Up For A Faith Walk”, Job 1: 13-22 “ God Always Has One,” Job 2:1-10 “The Struggle Goes On and On,” Job 2:11-13& John 15:15 “He Called Me Friend.”
3. Utilize resources such as Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Michael Duduit, *Preaching with Power*, Alan M. Blankstein, *Failure is Not an Option* and Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*.
4. Preach a sermon that addresses cultural diversity and illiteracy in our neighbors, the Howard Housing community.

5. Create Inspirational Banners enhance the presence of the Holy Spirit during worship services as well as engage non-readers to sight-reading, e.g. banner displaying scripture such as: 1 Chronicles 16:9, Judges 5:3, and Psalm 100.
6. Engage in activities that will include Howard Housing. .

Evaluation:

- At the end of walk-through, site team members will prepare a written document of their observations. They will then report to the congregation on their findings.
- Reflection of sermons and Bible study will be on-going for clarity from the congregation toward equipping them for the needs of Howard Housing.

Goal 2

Recruit and train church leaders to act as tutors to selected participants of Howard Housing with a full awareness of its complex illiteracy problems.

Strategies:

1. Recruit and train tutors
2. Plan a retreat to engage the Site Team and congregation in participation and sensitivity toward the community

Evaluation:

- Have a summit with church leaders regarding their insight into the illiteracy that appears to be gripping the community in negative ways, e.g., the lack or the inability to complete a given task such as high school. On-going observation will be utilized to better understand the systemic problems in Howard Housing which causes her to focus on the negative in the community rather than the positive.

Goal 3: Develop criteria for selecting participants by using a questionnaire, for example, utilize the Test for Adult Basic Examination (TABE) Pre-Test/Post-Test in determining/assessing their educational ability.

Strategy 1: Develop an educational campaign along with a curriculum specific to leadership and the Howard Housing.

Strategy 2: Determine the criteria for selection of GED applicants

Strategy 3: Recruit Applicants who will take part in the GED survey and enroll in the program

Evaluation:

- Request from the congregation and the Site Team on-going feedback regarding the cultural diversity in the community and their willingness to engage in healthy ways to enhance the literacy campaign awareness programs.

Goal 4: Develop a Literacy Program emphasizing the GED

Strategy 1: Provide the time and space for instructional information re: GED for the enrollees

Strategy 2: Create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning, including free access to the internet, allow applicants to explore their surroundings

Strategy 3: Establish tutor schedules and monitor progress

Evaluation:

- Prepare a written document of the number of students who successfully complete the program and drop out of the program
- Assign a site team member to do interviews of the church's leaders pre- and post-attitude toward Howard Housing
- Store information on-line so that it can be downloaded for analysis.
- Assess Site Team's attitudes toward Howard.
- Provide written assessment of the church's views both pre and post and develop role-playing based upon their views
- Perform verbal surveys to determine the on-going findings and results.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Questions (1) How will the leaders in the church prepare itself to address the needs of the community in terms of its social, educational and economic plight? Will the church leaders become attuned to the illiteracy problem that has prohibited the community from developing in a fruitful and product manner? How will the church leaders address the issue of apathy which is so apparent? Should the church dare to make a difference in the Howard Housing community which is seemingly disconnected from the church leaders? Finally, how will the church be affected by the educational literacy awareness programs, such as preaching /teaching serials?

Research Question (2) What are the biblical, theological and historical, issues in The Howard Housing community that inhibit the church awareness in regards to the community needs?

Research Question (3) What are the demographics that impact the Brownsville AMEZ Church and Howard Housing community? And how have the demographics changed over the years?

Overall Assessment of Goal 1

Raise the awareness of identifiable issues, such as illiteracy that has left the church community disconnected from the larger community. And/or what variables have plagued the communities—e.g., drugs, guns, lack of health care?

Over All Assessment of Goal 2

Form a team that will assist in developing a team of leaders to enhance the church growth in the community.

Over All Assessment of Goal 3

Develop with a team in the church dedicated to the challenge statement so that the church will create measureable actions—e.g. series of preaching/teaching, voter's registration and preparation for the GED program.

(1) Implementation of Student's Ministry Banners, Custom Banners, e.g. Fruit of the Spirit banners. Pictures of the youth performing in liturgy dance.

(2) Implementation of Praise Dance: How to Teach the Praise Dance, The Different Types of Praise Dance and Women's Ministry Line Dance, as well as circle dance. On-going praise will be demonstrated.

(3) Strategic plans that will enhance small church growth—to develop leadership in the church community.

Diverse programs will be utilized once the core groups (males, youth) are identified as persons needing intervention in educational assistance. Campaigns for awareness programs will be established to improve, strengthen and hopefully enhance their belief in the spiritual transformation. Programs and Services will be established for the church that will speak directly to the identified needs and desires of the Howard Housing community.

Hopefully, this effort will lead to developing an educational awareness program that will address the literacy need. Establish and maintain services to address the apathy in the Howard Housing community because of lack of education. Church leaders will enable the Howard Housing community by working in collaboration with them. It is our

hope that through the educational services offered by the church leaders, and through these efforts, the Howard Housing community will realize their dreams and struggles. Church leaders will encourage the Howard Housing community to actualize their role and their importance to the body of Christ. The targeted audience will be the entire Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church community. Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Community has a large parking area. Plans will continue to be considered and implemented to house events on the church grounds (e.g., a circus) that will attract new and young people. It could be a kid's crusade, a concert or something completely new that perhaps have never been done before.

Plans of services will be advertised to promote events for at least a month before they take place. Outreach, such as handing out flyers, instructing church members to make personal invitations to friends and neighbors, advertising on the radio and public access television, in our local newspapers and on free community bulletin boards, will be done. Plans to make the Howard Housing in the Brownsville community become involved in the larger world will include handing out flyers for voter's registration and encouraging them to register to vote and participate in the general election, as well as restarting the GED Program.

All planned programs will be held as scheduled. Workshops will be implemented to ensure that they are environmentally friendly and non-threatening by de-emphasizing the religious aspects of the event. That is, who are we in Jesus Christ?

On-going events would be instituted during the initial event, for example advertising of follow-up of events. For example, we might hold a fellowship dinner after

the program. Then the next day, follow up the event with thank-you notes or phone calls. The Church would only use our friendliest parishioners to engage with the invited guests.

As the pastor, I will remind the congregation that nothing can replace the Holy Spirit. We must be embodied with the blood of the crucified Lamb, if Brownsville AMEZ Church Community is to grow. We will utilize all the possible resources on church growth with expectations that if we build a strong foundation the church will grow. We will be governed by Ephesians 6 “having done all to stand.” God is in charge, and we must learn to trust and rely on His guidance and power at all times. Ask Him how to make the church foundation a stronger body in kingdom building and enable us to be a part that God will of that growth.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION PROCESS

Evaluation

- The evaluation of the Project will provide a process whereby the overall plan will be implemented for evaluation.
- The evaluation of the Project will be measurable. Growth, measured through interviewing persons in the Howard Housing who enroll in the literacy educational awareness campaign programs and its services.
- The evaluation of literacy educational awareness campaign programs will be clear and concise. We will know that the project is effective through on-going monitoring of verbal interaction with the community. It will be validated through collaboration with the Site-Team.

CHAPTER 6

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

The Process

The members of the Site Team dedicated considerable time and vigor in supporting me in the process of competency assessment. The Site Team members involved were Dr. Sally A. Thompson (Hempstead, N.Y.), Belinda Fernandez (West Hempstead, N.Y.), Renee Love (Decatur, Ga.), Dr. Sheila Lyle (Stockbridge Ga.), Doreathea Hamilton (Brooklyn, N.Y.), Feola Murray (Bronx, N.Y.), Terrance Harris (Bronx, N.Y.), Lamont & Dr. Ruthie Cannon (Durham, N.Y.), and Deloris Hampton, (Brooklyn, N.Y.).

The Site Team and I convened in May of 2012 and I informed them of the assessment process. Renee Love agreed to collect and summarize the assessments.

The Site Team conference met during the second week of July with my assistance and responded to their responsibility. Each then shared with me their areas relating to my growth in this project.

A summary of the Site Team's and my assessment of ministerial competencies follow.

Theologian

Rev. Lyle comprehends the principles and authority of the church. She proclaims the doctrine of faith and is able to express, justify, and interpret the word of God. She has a belief in the inerrancy of the scriptures and believes that man's character is only prone

in the direction of sin, but is not in servitude to it. Candidate feels the need to continue her focus on a theological foundation that emphasizes diversity and evangelism.

Preacher

Reverend Lyle is strong in her spiritual disciplines. She demonstrates an ability to exalt God through the teaching of His word, the promotion of evangelism, and the encouragement of others. She is a visionary and is proficient in communicating with clarity the word of God. Her sermons exhibit her efficacy in its preparation and presentation. Her teachings provide biblical instruction that is applicable to laity. Candidate desires to develop leaders within the congregation that will effectively impart the word of God to others.

Worship Leader

Reverend Lyle has a heart for worship ministry. She has a strong sense of call to serve God and leads with confidence, communicates with clarity, and is able to work affectively with members to inspire, motivate, and mobilize them to discover and attain their spiritual giftedness. She works tirelessly and is committed to growing the ministry, serving Christ, and meeting the needs of the congregation. Candidate desires to continue to utilize the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Bicentennial Hymnal and other culturally explicit rituals in the church worship.

Change Agent

Rev. Lyle is able to effect change through her excellent abilities to assess situations, and draw from her experiences needed programs, services, and activities for the benefit of the community. Her eagerness and positive approach serves to attract and involve others to the causes. It is through her church activities that Rev. Lyle is able to develop a sense of interest, belonging and ownership for the development of their church,

programs and activities. Rev. Lyle is aware of today's social injustices and understands the needs of individuals and community. Candidate desires to learn more about the various cultures in her community.

Ecumenist

Rev. Lyle's strong religious upbringing, religious educational background, exposure to other faiths, and visit to Israel has led her to have a respect for, and an appreciation of religious differences and similarities. She articulates an understanding of other faiths and cultures. She speaks of her relationship with others interfaith and encourages others to participate in interdenominational projects. Candidate wants to increase her awareness of the practices of other religions within her church community, as well as their social/cultural customs and needs.

Leader

Rev. Lyle is an organizer who recognizes people's talents and engages them in activities that will reinforce their self-confidence. She is supportive and encourages individuals to go beyond their comfort zone. As a leader, she recognizes that some individuals need to be held to the task which she is able to do in a respectful manner. Candidate wants to feel more comfortable when calling individuals to task.

Religious Educator

Rev. Lyle is an infectious leader who sows the seed. She is a meticulous educator and fastidious in her preparation and delivery of focal points. She supervises, involves and trains church leaders with compassion. She has the ability to influence others in the progression of understanding. Candidate wants to continue to develop a collection of intellectual resources that stress academic growth, spiritual development, and inclusiveness in God's kingdom.

Counselor

Rev. Lyle is able to rely on her professional counseling skills when working with individuals who are seeking guidance and support in their personal and religious life. She is able to develop and maintain an excellent counseling relationship that allows for an on-going trusting and confidential atmosphere to exist. She is able to effectively work with individuals because of her excellent verbal skills. Candidate believes that she must always be conscious of feelings as a spiritual leader.

Pastor/Shepherd

Reverend Lyle's organizational skills allow her to implement successful church programs that have served to attract new church members. Her patience and acceptance of people has been vital for the growth and success of her ministerial programs and services. Candidate recognizes that she needs to explore new services for the growth of the church.

Spiritual Leader

Reverend Lyle is dedicated and passionate about the mental, physical, and spiritual welfare of all. She focuses on service to the congregation and surrounding community. She demonstrates values that incorporate service, stewardship, and social responsibility. She is concerned about holiness and cultivates character. Candidate feels the need to continue to study and develop spiritually

Administrator

Reverend Lyle establishes clear procedures for collecting, documenting, and reporting data. She has an ability to effectively allocate financial resources to support programs and activities acquired by the church. She communicates effectively the vision for the church and encourages the collaboration of community and church relationships.

Candidate continues to work on improving external programs and the push of leaders to uphold accountability for tasks assigned.

Professional Skills

Reverend Lyle's exceptional counseling skills, excellent communication skills, and the ability to draw people to her has led her to be well-respected and trusted by the people she serves. She is an enthusiastic and positive person who affects change within her ministry. Candidate will develop a realistic time frame when developing and implementing future programs and services for the church and community.

This process was very needed and appreciated for the Site Team whose unwavering faith in God enabled them to develop multifaceted views regarding me in ministerial competencies

Strategies:

As Preacher

I will endeavor with the leadership of the Almighty to study literature that will enhance my growth and the church's awareness towards betterment in the community.

I will seek-out persons that have been in the community for a long period of time, and gather information as related to church growth.

I will utilize sermons, advertisements, films and other media that will address complacency.

I will continue to join in the community meetings where the conditions of the community are addressed but I will implement programs that will address the needs of the community.

As Counselor

I will always solicit God's intervention no matter what I endeavor to undertake. God will always be the fore-runner in my life. I will pursue God's assistance when it comes to listening to others. Demonstration of patience will be one of the fruits that I will strive to do.

APPENDICES

**Appendix A
Timeline**

Date	Task/Activity	Tools/Necessary to complete task	Person Responsible
November 2012	Submitting Demonstration Proposal of the Demonstration Project	Arranging to meet with Editor for initial fee	Self
November 2012	Review Project	Site Team and their assistance	Self
February 2013	Hopefully the Proposal will meet with Advisor's approval Continue Research Proposal	Select a Mentor/ Advisor	Self
March 2013	Recruit congregants for walk through	Report on members activities	Self and congregation
Early April 2013	Design and produce flyers/brochures re: literacy training	Powerpoint design and printing	Self and church team
Late April 2013	Sign up members for tutor training	GED books/cd's for training	Self
May 2013	Train volunteers	Church space available	Self and church volunteers
May 2013	Survey church members on attitudes toward residents	Record results	Site team
May 2013	Sign up residents interested in literacy/GED	Make church available as site for training	Self
May 2013	Administer test determine literacy level to	Record results	Self/Site team
June 2013	Begin tutoring residents	GED test prep books/laptops	Church volunteers
June 2013	Continue research		Self

June 2013	Administer GED practices test	GED test books/cd-laptops	Church volunteers
June 2013	Design/produce banners		Church volunteers
June 2013	Continue Research	Meet with Mentor/Advisor	Self
July 2013	Deliver sermon	Deliver questionnaire re: effectiveness	Self/congregation
July 2013	Record results of questionnaire		Site team
July 2013	Continue research		Self
July 2013	Tutor residents	Survey residents on tutoring	Church volunteers
August 2013	Sign up residents for GED		Church volunteers
August 2013	Research		Self
August 2013	Deliver sermon	Deliver questionnaire re: effectiveness	Self/congregation
September 2013	Survey residents/students	Collect data on tutor effectiveness	Site team
September 2013	Survey church members on attitudes toward residents	Record results	Self/site team
September 2013	Continue research		Self
September 2013	Meet site team	Report data from projects	Self/site team
September 2013	Meet with advisor	Research thus far	self
October 2013	Begin writing project		Self
November 2013	Continue writing	Consult with editor ongoing basis	Self
November 2013	Meet with advisor		self
December 2013	Write/consult editor		self

January 2014	Finish writing project submit to editor for final edit		Self
February 2014	Submit project		Self
February 2014	Continue with research of Proposal Project and preparing to defend Proposal Project	Preparing power-point for Dissertation invite a couple of the Site-Teams Members to the defending Proposal Meeting	Self
May 2014	Met mentor/Advisor preparing for graduation	Meet with Site Team inform them of the outcome	Self
May-June 2014	Completion of Proposal Dissertation, Professional Binding and Submitting to Advisor	Preparing for graduation- Hallelujah!	Self and permitting Site Team Members to Stole-me during graduation

**Appendix B
Budget**

Person Responsible	Cost	Source of Funding
Flyers, Brochures, Advertisements/Speakers/Site Team Location Rental	\$150.00	Self
Proposal Editor's Fee	\$400.00	
Project Editor's Fee	\$100.00	Self
Transportation, tolls Parking and meeting food	\$1500.00	Self
Binding, Paper, and other materials that needed for the completion of the project.	\$1000.00	Self
Total	\$3150.00	

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**APPENDIX B
BAPTISM CERTIFICATE**



***Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
Baptism Certificate
This is to certify that***

Baptized on the _____ day of _____ in the year of our Lord, 201_

According to the Rites of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

Pastor: Amanda Lyle-Coke

From the Baptismal Register of this Church

Holy Spirit of God & His Attending Heavenly Host

1593 East New York Avenue

Brooklyn, New York 11212

Preacher's Steward: Deloris Hampton _____

Chairman of Trustee: Elvis Reed _____

Church Secretary: Doreathea Hamilton _____

APPENDIX C
CHURCH LEADERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of the Pastor: Pastor: Amanda Lyle
Church: Brownsville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
Age of the church 61:
Address: 1593 East New York Avenue Brooklyn, New York, 11212
Phone Number: 1347-627-5554_
Email Address: brownsvilleamezionchurch@yahoo.com or pastor's
alylecoke@gmail.com

Q1. Have you ever been?

- ☐ An Evangelist leader
- ☐ A Devotional leader
- ☐ A Head Deaconess leader
- ☐ A Trustee leader
- ☐ A Church Member in another denomination
- ☐ Pastor
- ☐ Other

Q2. Which of the following characteristics of leadership do you process?

- ☐ Endurance
- ☐ Patience
- ☐ Humility
- ☐ Self-Control
- ☐ Generosity
- ☐ Kindness
- ☐ Sympathy
- ☐ Empathy
- ☐ Willingness
- ☐ Love
- ☐ Compassion
- ☐ All of the above

Q3. Which of the following leadership tasks are you participating in with the church?

- ☐ Preparing disciples for God
- ☐ Encouraging disciples to become partners in the church
- ☐ Administering the Sacraments in church
- ☐ Preaching, teaching and baptizing
- ☐ Visitation of the sick and shut-ins
- ☐ Demonstrating empathy toward others
- ☐ Out Reach ministries
- ☐ All of the above

Q4. How do you respond to difficulties or challenges?

- _____ Meet with enthusiasm and anticipation of solving
- _____ Encounter the challenge with the belief that it can be solved
- _____ Approach the challenge with deductive reasoning
- _____ Seek for the solution that is pleasing without comprising God's standards
- _____ Solicit resources and information to find positive outcomes

Q5. From the following learned skills which skills will enhance the church leadership strengths the most?

- _____ Self confidence in my relationship in God
- _____ Demonstrating the ability to forgive and prayerful to move forward in my faith walk
- _____ Walk by faith and not rely solely on touching, seeing, feeling, tasting and hearing
- _____ trusting others as I learn to love unconditional love

Q6. Are you willing to become transparent for God to demonstrate your obedience to leadership? _____ Yes _____ No

- _____ Will you admit your imperfections
- _____ Will you admit when you have wronged someone?
- _____ Exposing your accountabilities to others
- _____ preaching/teaching sermons of yourself that is, telling your faults to others even if it is not flattering for you?
- _____ Preaching and teaching with your commitment to God only even when you cannot see your path clearly

_____ If you had an opportunity to change anything ecclesiastical, name three things that you would change immediately

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____

Why would you want to change the three things? Do you feel that the church would become more equip spiritual? _____

APPENDIX D
CHURCH SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

:

Name of the Respondent: _____

Work Phone: _____ Email id: _____

Gender: _____ Age: _____

Church that you are affiliated with: _____

Q1. How many times have you participated in services in this church since you have become a member Church?

_____ Three months

_____ Only six months

_____ More than once but less than a year

_____ First time at this particular church but I am an avid church-goer

_____ How do you weigh church growth spiritually

_____ How do you assess church growth numerically

Q2. Which of the following churches have you attended before?

_____ Anglican (Catholic Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church, AME Zion)

_____ Southern Baptist Church

_____ Antiochian Orthodox Church

_____ Apostolic Catholic Church

_____ Episcopalian Church

_____ Christ Catholic Church

_____ Church of God In Christ

_____ United Methodist Church

_____ Christian Reformed Church

_____ Church of the Nazarene

_____ Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church

_____ Missionary Baptist Church

_____ Islamic Church

_____ Church of Latter Day Saints

_____ Seven Day Adventist

_____ Mormon

Q3. How far is your house from the church?

_____ Less than 1 mile

_____ Between 1 and 3 miles

_____ Between 3 and 5 miles

_____ More than 5 miles

_____ Thirty of more miles

Q4. Have been involved in church service twice or more this month?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Q5. How many persons from the church congregation have you contacted since last Sunday?

- ☐ One person
- ☐ Two persons
- ☐ Three or more persons
- ☐ No one

Q6. Which ministry would you like to work in to enhance kingdom building?

- ☐ Prayer Warriors
- ☐ Via-telephonic Prayer
- ☐ Via-telephonic Bible Study
- ☐ Prayer Meeting
- ☐ Bible Readings
- ☐ Youth Ministry
- ☐ Champion Literacy Awareness Programs
- ☐ Buds of Promise
- ☐ Men Ministry
- ☐ Women Ministry
- ☐ Worshipper Ministry
- ☐ Sabbath
- ☐ Sermon or homily
- ☐ Choral music
- ☐ Baptism
- ☐ Confession
- ☐ Anointing of the Sick
- ☐ Marriage
- ☐ Funeral
- ☐ Psalms
- ☐ Profession of Faith
- ☐ Liturgical Dance

APPENDIX E
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE:

Where you ever a Pastor or Co-Pastor?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Did you have a Mentor and was he/she able to work with you in effectively?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Do you believe that everyone has been gifted by God with prophetic imagination?

_____ Yes _____ No

_____ What new insights have you gained since you have become involved?

Name: Two

(1) _____

(2) _____

What administrative roles did you perform? _____ and was it difficult?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Would you assist another person in mastering the task that you did/have? _____ Yes

_____ No

_____ Since you are now leaders would pray more for your pastor's leadership and the vision for the church?

_____ Yes _____ No

Would you return to your previous pastor if requested?

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ As a leader do you now appreciate your pastor and other leaders' responsibility?

_____ Yes _____ No

Do you now understand the sacrifices that come with being a leader?

_____ Yes _____ No

Would you like a meaningful way to dialogue with your pastor?

_____ Yes

_____ No

May we solicit your Email ID of your Pastor if available?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Have you ever told your pastor thank you for permitting God to leader him/her as he/she led me?

_____ Yes _____ No

Were your confidentiality ever broken with the pastor or other leaders in the church, if so how did it make you feel?

Please respond to the following leadership development constructed questions

Q1. Have you ever been a spiritual leader during your years of service in this church?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Would you like to give of your services, and in which capacity?

Q2 According to your duties did you perform as a spiritual leader in (please respond yes or no)?

_____ Like a spiritual leader

_____ Like a spiritual mentor

_____ Like spiritual leader who wanted your mentee to become effective in his endeavors

_____ Ineffectively

_____ Effectively

Q3. As Site Team/Church Leaders how were your leadership skills improved during this study?

_____ Working as a spiritual leader in collaboration with other leaders

_____ Encouraging and empowering confidence in others

_____ Empowering leaders to serve humanity and in doing so they are rending their services to God.

_____ Soliciting and encouraging personality development by examining oneself

Q4. How would you assess effective leadership development and how should it be administered, should it be with humility or conceit?

_____ with dignity I

would _____

_____ with compassion would lead

them _____

Q5.How can your oratory skills improve your leadership qualities, do you feel that you speak now with more clarity?

_____ Yes _____ No

Q6. Do you now feel that you are more effect as a leader after participating in this study on improving interpersonal skills?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Finally, in what way have you as a church leader participated in the Champion Literary Awareness Program_____

As Site Team/Church Leaders would you participate in this type of study again? Would you be willing to give more or less time to the improvement to help others? What would you have changed and why? Please describe in your own words what you feel now about worship and lifestyle is there a difference? If so what is the difference?_____

APPENDIX F RESULTS OF MONKEY SURVEY

Church Leadership Questionnaire

1. Have you ever been?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
An Evangelist	13.3%	2
A Devotional Leader	20.0%	3
A Head	13.3%	2
Deaconess Leader	20.0%	3
A Trustee Leader	20.0%	3
A church Member in another denomination	46.7%	7
Pastor	6.7%	1
Other	33.3%	5
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

2. Which of the following characterisitcs of leadership do you possess?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Endurance	21.4%	3
Patience	35.7%	5
Humility	14.3%	2
Self-Control	21.4%	3
Generosity	21.4%	3
Kindness	42.9%	6
Sympathy	35.7%	5
Empathy	21.4%	3
Willingness	7.1%	1
Love	35.7%	5
Compassion	14.3%	2
All of the above	50.0%	7
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		1

3. Which of the following leadership tasks are you participating in with the Church?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Preparing disciples for God	7.7%	1
Encouraging disciples to become partners in the Church	38.5%	5
Administering the Sacraments	15.4%	2
Preaching, teaching, and baptizing	23.1%	3
Demonstrating empathy toward others	53.8%	7
Visitation of the sick and shut-ins	15.4%	2
Out Reach ministries	23.1%	3
all of the above	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		13
<i>skipped question</i>		2

4. How do you respond to difficulties and challenges		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Meet with enthusiasm and anticipation of solving	40.0%	6
Encounter the challenge with the belief that it can be solved	46.7%	7
Approach the challenge with deductive reasoning	6.7%	1
Seek for the solution that is pleasing without compromising God's standards	6.7%	1
Solicit resources and information to find positive outcomes	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

5. From the following learned skills which skills enhance the church leadership strengths the most?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Self confidence in my relationship with God	40.0%	6
Demonstrating the ability to forgive and prayerful to move forward in my faith walk	60.0%	9
Trusting others as I learn to love unconditional love	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		15
<i>skipped question</i>		0

6. Are you willing to become transparent for God to demonstrate your obedience to leadership

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	14
No	0.0%	0
Will you admit your perfections	85.7%	12
Will you admit when you have wronged someone?	92.9%	13
Exposing your accountabilities to others	28.6%	4
Preaching/teaching sermons of yourself that is, telling your faults to others even if it is not flattering for you?	28.6%	4
Preaching and teaching with your commitment to God only even when you cannot see your path clearly	28.6%	4
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		1

7. If you had the opportunity to change anything ecclesiastical, name three things that you would change immediately		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	100.0%	10
2	60.0%	6
3	40.0%	4
<i>answered question</i>		10
<i>skipped question</i>		5

8. Why would you change the three things?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	3
<i>answered question</i>	3
<i>skipped question</i>	12

9. Do you feel that the Church would become more equipped spiritually?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	7
No	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		8

Church Survey Questionnaire

1. How many times have you participated in services in this church since you have become a member?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
three months	25.0%	2
only six months	37.5%	3
more than once but less than a year	37.5%	3
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		5

2. How do you weigh church growth spiritually	
Answer Options	Response Count
	3
<i>answered question</i>	3
<i>skipped question</i>	10

3. How do you assess church growth numerically?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	1
<i>answered question</i>	1
<i>skipped question</i>	12

4. Which of the following churches have you attended before?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Anglican (Catholic Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church)	58.3%	7
Southern Baptist Church	50.0%	6

Antiochan Orthodox Church	0.0%	0
Apostolic Catholic Church	33.3%	4
Episcopal Church	33.3%	4
Christ Catholic Church\	8.3%	1
Church of God In Christ	75.0%	9
United Methodist Church	58.3%	7
Christian reformed Church	0.0%	0
Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church	0.0%	0
Missionary Baptist Church	41.7%	5
Islamic Church	0.0%	0
Church of Latter Day Saints	0.0%	0
Seven Day Adventist	16.7%	2
Mormon	0.0%	0
Option Cherry	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		12
<i>skipped question</i>		1

5. How far is your house from the church?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
less than one mile	16.7%	2
between 1 and 3 miles	16.7%	2
between 3 and 5 miles	16.7%	2
more than 5 miles	25.0%	3
thirty or more miles	25.0%	3
<i>answered question</i>		12
<i>skipped question</i>		1

6. How many persons from the church congregation have you contacted since last Sunday?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
One person	23.1%	3
Two person	15.4%	2
three or more person	15.4%	2
No one	46.2%	6
<i>answered question</i>		13
<i>skipped question</i>		0

7. Which ministry would you like to work in to enhance kingdom building?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Prayer warriors	20.0%	2
via-telephone prayer	30.0%	3
via-telephone Bible study	30.0%	3
prayer meeting	20.0%	2
Bible readings	10.0%	1
youth ministry	50.0%	5
champion literacy awareness program	20.0%	2
buds of promise	0.0%	0
men ministry	10.0%	1
women ministry	70.0%	7
worshipper ministry	10.0%	1
Sabbath sermon or homily	10.0%	1
	0.0%	0
choral music	60.0%	6
baptism	40.0%	4
confession	10.0%	1
anointing of the sick	10.0%	1
marriage	20.0%	2
funeral	30.0%	3
Psalms	10.0%	1
Profession of Faith	30.0%	3
Liturgical Dance	40.0%	4
<i>answered question</i>		10
<i>skipped question</i>		3

8. According to your duties, did you perform as a spiritual leader in		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
like a spiritual leader	33.3%	1
like a spiritual mentor	66.7%	2
Like spiritual leader who wanted your mentee to become effective in his endeavors	0.0%	0
ineffectively	0.0%	0
effectively	66.7%	2
<i>answered question</i>		3
<i>skipped question</i>		10

9. As site team/church leaders, how were your leadership skills improved during this study?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Working as a spiritual leader in collaboration with other leaders	28.6%	2
Encouraging and empowering confidence in others	71.4%	5
Empowering leaders to serve humanity and in doing so they are rendering their services to God.	0.0%	0
Soliciting and encouraging personality development by examining oneself.	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		6

10. Do you feel that you speak now with more clarity?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	83.3%	5
No	16.7%	1
<i>answered question</i>		6
<i>skipped question</i>		7

Leadership Development Continuation

1. Have you ever told your pastor thank you for permitting God to lead him/her as he/she led me?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	16.7%	1
No	83.3%	5
<i>answered question</i>		6
<i>skipped question</i>		5

2. Would you return to your previous pastor if requested?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	87.5%	7
No	12.5%	1
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		3

3. Would you like a meaningful way to dialogue with your pastor?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	87.5%	7
No	12.5%	1
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		3

4. Have you ever been a spiritual leader during your years of service in this church?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	20.0%	1
No	80.0%	4
<i>answered question</i>		5
<i>skipped question</i>		6

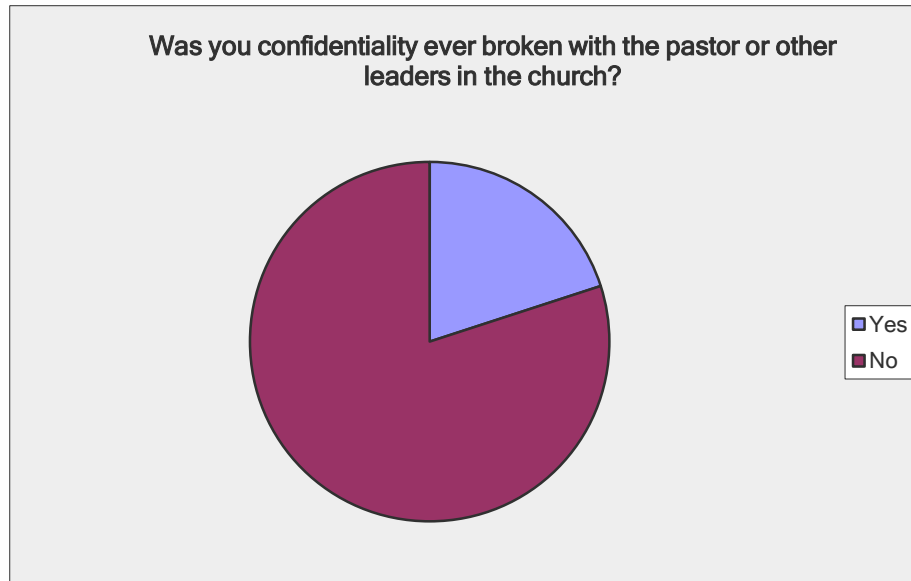
5. Would you like to give your services?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	1
No	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		1
<i>skipped question</i>		10

6. As site team/church leader, would you participate in this type of survey again?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	75.0%	3
No	25.0%	1
<i>answered question</i>		4
<i>skipped question</i>		7

7. With dignity and humility of character, would you assess effective leadership?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	2
No	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		2
<i>skipped question</i>		9

Leadership Development Questionnaire

Was your confidentiality ever broken with the pastor or other leaders in the church?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	20.0%	1
No	80.0%	4
<i>answered question</i>		5
<i>skipped question</i>		5



C:\Users\alylecoke\Documents\Survey\Church Survey.xls

C:\Users\alylecoke\Documents\Survey\Leadership Development Continuation.xls

C:\Users\alylecoke\Documents\Survey\Church Leadership Questionnaire.xls

C:\Users\alylecoke\Documents\Survey\Leadership Questionnaire.xls

APPENDIX G
BROWNSVILLE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH
MISSION STATEMENT

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 2 Chronicles (7:14 King James Version (KJV))

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